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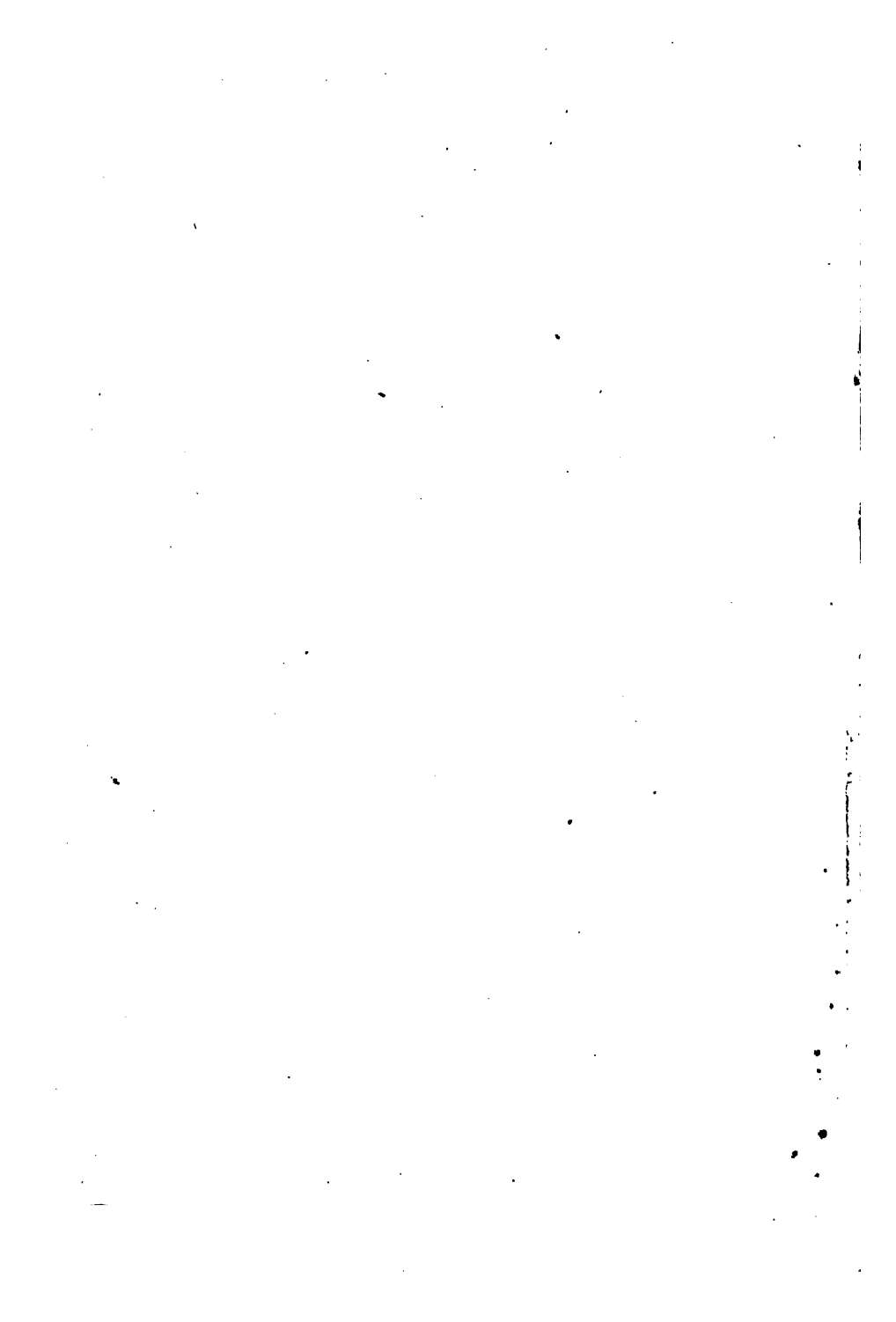
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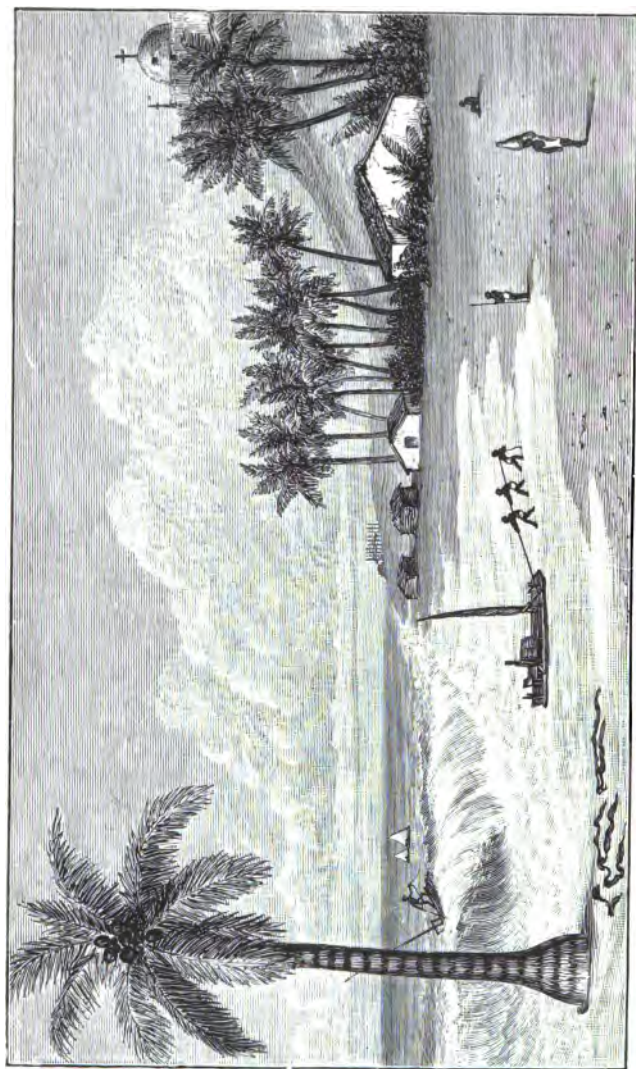
THE  
CRUISE OF THE "FALCON."

VOL. II.

LONDON  
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View near Olinda ; beaching a catamaran.

THE  
CRUISE OF THE "FALCON."

*A VOYAGE TO SOUTH AMERICA IN A  
30-TON YACHT.*

BY  
E. F. KNIGHT,  
BARRISTER-AT-LAW.

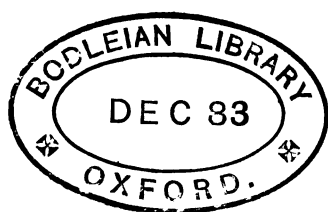
WITH MAPS AND NUMEROUS ILLUSTRATIONS.

IN TWO VOLUMES.  
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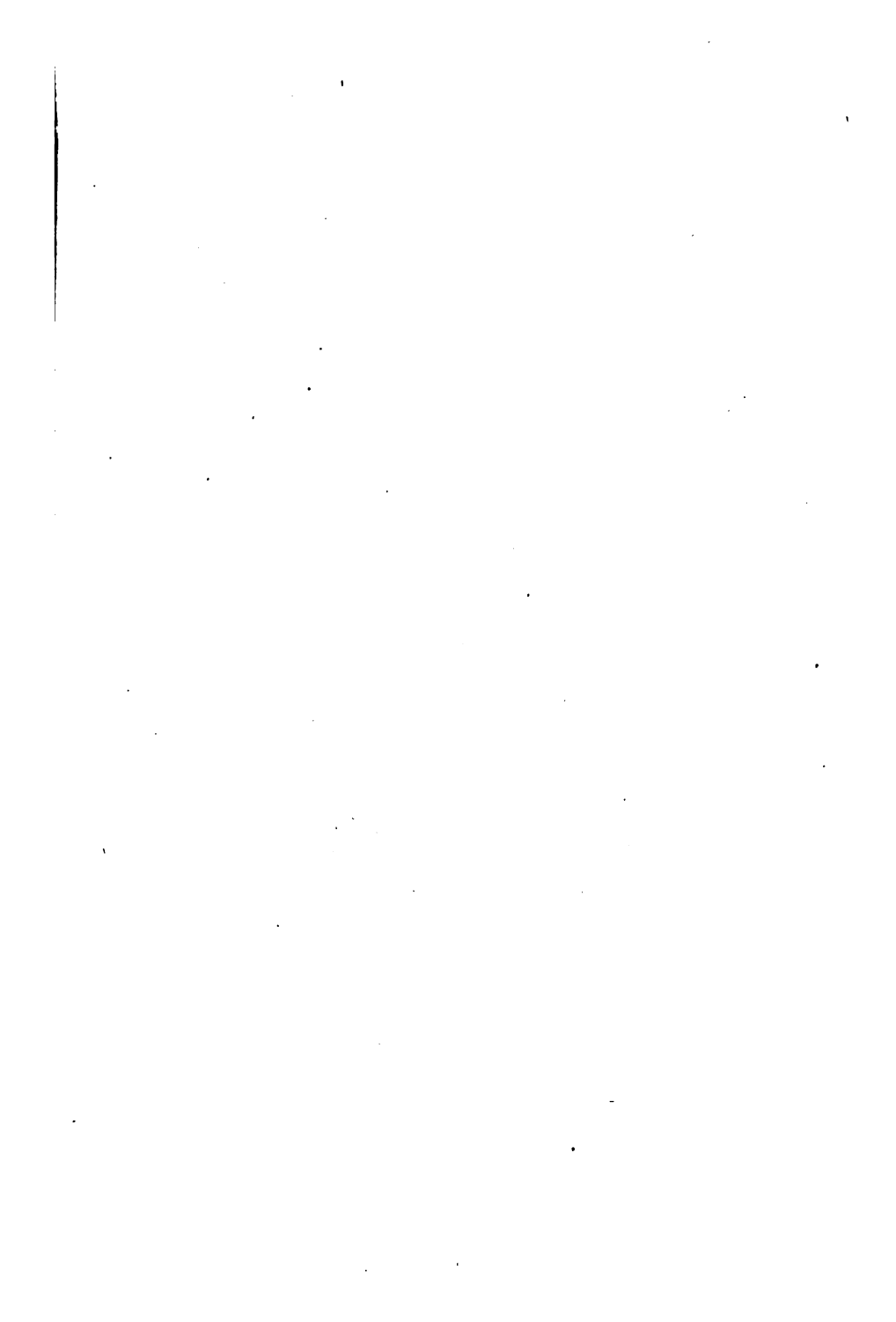
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# THE CRUISE OF THE FALCON.

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## CHAPTER I.

WE stayed about a week in Tucuman and its neighbourhood, and then returned by rail and steamer to Buenos Ayres. As we had to traverse five provinces on this journey, each having a different paper currency, we provided ourselves with a load of Chilian and Peruvian silver dollars, sols, as they are called, which are everywhere taken for eighty-two cents gold.

From Tucuman to Cordoba we were carried by the Government railway, and the evils of its administration were everywhere apparent; it compared very unfavourably with the other railway companies of the Republic under the management of Englishmen. Since the construction of this line by Count Teuffner, it has been more or less left to go to wreck, for ruinous economy in the way of repairs and renewing of rails and sleepers has ruled at the managing board.

A railway accident is the ordinary incident of travel on this line, for it is now so rotten and dilapidated that the train runs off the metals two or three times a week, notwithstanding that there are no

curves on the way, the rails being carried in one perfectly straight line across the level plains. However, passengers are but rarely injured by these accidents, for there are no high banks for the train to roll over. They even manage to get up a collision occasionally, an ingenious and extraordinary feat, requiring some calculation to bring about, seeing that one train only starts every other day from either terminus, and the rate of progress is so slow that it is almost possible to see the other train approaching when it is still half a day's journey off across the plain.

Of course we had our little accident; we run off the line and took a trip into the Salinas, till we were brought up, and, after some hours' delay, put on the rails again.

We were advised to carry a sufficiency of provisions with us; so we victualled our carriage with a demi-john of Mendoza wine, some cold fowls, sugar-canes to chew, and other luxuries, and made ourselves very comfortable during the two days' tedious journey to Córdoba. The stoppages were frequent; we passed half a night at a place called Recreo, for what object I know not, save it be for the purpose of putting money into the pockets of the exorbitant proprietor of a buffet that is there. We were continually halting at other little unnecessary stations in the salt-desert, where there were no villages, no goods or passengers to be discharged or taken up, nothing indeed but a station-master, sand, salt, and cacti. The delay at each of these stations was enormous.

The engine-driver and guard of our train would get out at each, light up their cigarettes, and look



dreamily across the burning desert for half an hour or so, as if in search of some impossible passengers that were coming up from the far horizon.

Had we anticipated these delays, we would have brought an ox with us, and made Manuel get out and cook us an asado on each platform as we travelled along. As might be expected, we took up no passengers at the stations on the Salinas—at some of the other stations we did. Then there was a double or treble delay, but this was not surprising to me after the following experience at the station of Tucuman.

I had found out that our united fares amounted to seventy-five dollars gold ; so, before presenting myself at the ticket-office, I had calculated what this would be in sols at eighty-two. I counted out the proper number and presented them to the ticket-clerk. But to him this calculation was a very serious matter, and not to be hurried over ; so he called me into his office separately, keeping all the other passengers waiting, and said solemnly,—

“Come, senor, let us calculate this,” at the same time producing a large sheet of foolscap, a pen, and a horn of powder.

So we calculated ; he was not what one would call a ready mathematician, this clerk ; over and over again he attacked the difficult problem, irritated, perplexed, impatient, yet ever polite. At each attempt he brought out a different sum ; I worked it out for him, but he utterly despised my result. I had arrived at it too quickly, with too few figures. I could not be right ; it was not such a simple matter as all that. At last some new way of reckoning—an

inspiration of genius—flashed across his brain, and after covering another sheet of paper with a row of five-barred gates with a lot of figures running a steeple-chase across them, he came to a conclusion. The number of sols he asked for was less than that I had computed, but he insisted he was right, and would take no more. I paid him and off he rushed to repeat the process with others who were bringing him the moneys of different provinces to puzzle further his addled brain.

When I was settled down in the train, he flew back to me, informed me that he had just discovered a new and infallible way of calculating, which, applied to my case, showed that I still owed him two sols. He was almost right this time, not quite, so I paid him the additional demand ; I believe, as we now stand, he owes me twopence.

It certainly must be a maddening profession, calculating fractions before a wild, jabbering, impatient crowd of half-breeds, who by the way are exceedingly suspicious of the clerk's arithmetic, and squabble with him fearfully on principle, for they are far too mathematically obtuse themselves to have the remotest conception of how much change they should receive.

It was early in the morning of our second day's journey that we entered the province of Catamarca and traversed the Salinas. Waggon-tanks of water are attached to the train while crossing these arid wastes, to feed the engine and supply the rare stations. Just now, however, of water, salt though, there was no lack. It was the rainy season in the distant Sierras, and, as often occurs, the floods had poured

down and almost entirely covered these wide flat expanses. As viewed from the train, the Salinas presented in places the appearance of a shoreless sea, for all round the horizon was of water rippling before a strong north wind ; the stations, which are built on raised spots, stood out like islands in this sea, on to which the little salt waves dashed constantly. With these exceptions nothing rose above the waters, save here and there the tall gaunt cacti, looking like ships at anchor with their yards squared. Scarlet flamingoes seemed to be now the only inhabitants of this waste, for the deer and other beasts of the desert had been driven back by the waters to take refuge in the higher lands.

We stayed a couple of days in old Cordoba, bade farewell to faithful Manuel, and then took train to Rosario where we arrived on Good Friday. This day is observed with great solemnity in South America ; we found that all the shops were closed, and the inhabitants were dressed in universal black. The yards on all the schooners in the river were crossed, and the roughs and gamins were letting off crackers in the streets to the peril of passers by—burning Judas, as the custom is called.

We sailed to Campana in the steamer *Tridente*, one of a new company, the Argentine Lloyd. This is a splendid saloon steamer, built in Glasgow, and provided with every comfort and luxury. The attendance and table are most praiseworthy, and the vessel is illuminated throughout with the electric light. As we sailed up the Parana in the *Falcon*, later on, these steamers passed us by night on two or three occasions ; they were easily to be recognized

by their brilliancy ; they looked like gorgeously-illuminated jewel-hung palaces of Aladdin, floating by with their lofty galleries of light.

The captain of the *Tridente* is a Montenegrin. I once met a Montenegrin sailor in his own country ; he told me that he was the sole nautical specimen the little inland principality had ever turned out ; here, anyhow, was a second. I had a long yarn with him about about his native land, rarely he met any who had visited it, in South America.

Cold and keen seemed the wintry morning air, when we reached Campana, a great change after tropical Tucuman. Buenos Ayres too was bracing, to say the least of it, notwithstanding its bright sun. When we reached the Estación Centrale, we left our puma, who had behaved excellently during the voyage, save once when he wished to eat a white baby, in the cloak-room for an hour or so. He was tied up with a cord to a ring, and could only promenade round a circle of about three feet radius, but he somehow managed to get into plenty of mischief even within that space, and run up a nice little bill for his owners during their absence. He devoured a porter's shirt that was hanging within reach ; then a fellow-prisoner, a foolish turkey, that came too near his well-clawed paw ; then he wound himself up with his rope in an inextricable fashion, so that he could not move an inch. We found him thus, lying down, tied up, blinking patiently, purring, and licking his blood-covered chops.

And now, leading him with a cord, we went off to the Tigre to see how our poor old *Falcon* had got on during our absence. Our home and *Penates* we

found to be all right, but we heard that there had been strange doings on board while we were away. It seems that our boy Arthur had got into a row with some drunken sailors on shore, a policeman interfered, whereon the urchin knocked him down, jumped into the river, and swam on board. The assault was too serious to be overlooked, so the captain of the port sent off some of his men in a boat to arrest him. On seeing them approach, our crew dived down below, brought up a rifle, and threatened to exterminate his pursuers and bombard the port if they did not leave him alone. For many hours he kept the whole of the Tigre, with all the naval and military forces of the Argentine Republic, at bay. The people locked themselves up in their houses, terror seized all souls, and Arthur, master of the situation, proudly strutted up and down the deck, pointing his rifle instantly at any one who was rash enough to show his head. But, alas! the enemy by stratagem effected their purpose of taking prisoner that gallant crew. They knew that he would never surrender alive, and that his motto was that of the old French guard, so they waited till night. Under the influence of excitement and the caña he had drunk, Arthur at last fell asleep on the deck. With muffled oars a large body of men rowed off in boats from the *capitania*; they boarded the *Falcon*, and, before he was awake, the unconquered one was firmly fettered and carried off to a deep dungeon, where he was left to sober at his leisure, which he did with head-aching and lamentations. They soon released the drunken little rascal, and the authorities of the port behaved very well in the matter, kindly looked

over the offence, and laughed at it as rather a good joke.

We now set to work to fit out the *Falcon* once more for a lengthened cruise up the tributaries of the river Plate. We found that the fresh water had now stripped all the barnacles off her bottom ; she was as clean and bright as a new guinea. We took most of the chain and other heavy articles out of her ; by this lightening her draught to six feet, six inches, which is quite enough for the shallow Parana, and more than most of the steamers draw. This made her rather cranky, but not dangerously so.

It is impossible to ascend the ever-shifting channels of the Plata without a pilot, so we made an expedition to the Boca in search of one, for all the upper-river pilots are Italians and dwell in this seaport, which is so entirely foreign a settlement, that Spanish is scarcely ever heard on its quays ; gruff Genoese, rapid Neapolitan, and oily Greek being the most used and abused languages. Every *café* has its rough lithographs of Garibaldi, or Italian men-of-war on its walls, and quite a fleet of vessels is necessary to bring from Europe the annual supply of maccaroni and fonghi, that are necessities of life to these luxurious mariners from the Mediterranean and Ægean seas.

It has a cut-throat and evil reputation, this Boca del Riachuelo, but in one respect, anyhow, it is very far superior to Buenos Ayres or any city of South America. He who strolls along these streets and quays will often see really most beautiful girls, even of the lower orders, trip lightly by him—fair Italian and Basque damsels coyly holding bright-coloured shawls round their pretty heads. I felt quite senti-

mental in the Boca, and my thoughts were carried far away to happy Europe, where beautiful women are so marvellously many. To appreciate England properly it is only needful to pass a few months among a Spanish South American people, with its hideous half-breed girls, who actually do not even know that they are plain, but grin and flirt in the most indecent manner if you only look at them.

In the Boca we ordered a new boat to be built of cedar and other native woods, to replace the dinghy we had lost in our collision with the steamer ; we also purchased an old flat-bottomed canoe, such as the river schooners carry, for use on our cruise up the Parana.

We heard of a first-rate Genoese pilot who would come with us for 1000 dollars, 6*l.*, a month, and therefore engaged him.

Having lost Andrews, it was necessary to find some sailor to take his place ; so I went down with Jerdein to the beach of Buenos Ayres, where the foreign sailors, the shipping-masters, crimps, slop-tailors, and other people whose business in life is connected with the salt water do most congregate. A wonderfully cosmopolitan loafing-ground is this ; beach-combers of all nations, mostly sulky and down-at-heel, lolled about lazily outside the grog-shops, and ship-chandleries ; Italians, Greeks, Bascos, bronzed, cutthroat-looking rascals most of them, with scarlet sashes and gold earrings ; British runaway sailors, too, far the most disreputable and debased-looking of the lot. An English sailor we determined not to get, for all such as are to be picked up in these South American ports are worse than worthless, as any



master of a vessel knows. If we had engaged one of these drunken shirkers of work, we should doubtless have had to throw him overboard within a few days.

Through a shipping-agent we found a very decent sailor-boy of seventeen, an English subject, it is true, but hardly an Englishman ; he was of Malay parents, and born in Mauritius, so spoke both Creole-English and Creole-French.

On the 7th of May our pilot, Don Juan by name, came on board ; he turned out to be a great dandy ; he brought an umbrella with him, an article quite unknown with us ; also lace-covered pillows for his bed, and a looking-glass. He had a gigantic trunk of clothes, his *maté* and *bombilla*, and his dispensary consisting of a roll of sulphur. I have noticed that Italian sailors invariably carry an enormous amount of bedding and luggage with them on board ship, very unlike our own improvident mariners, who so often report themselves with nothing save what is on their back, even when bound for a voyage round the Horn in winter-time.

We were now all ready for sea ; but from May the 7th to May the 12th we were stuck hard on the mud by the Tigre bank, waiting for the waters of the river to rise. This was a time of impatience for us ; we stayed on board, and only on one occasion went down to Buenos Ayres, for at any moment the *crescente* might come and float us off.

I think it was on that one occasion that we witnessed the military funeral procession of an old general who had fought victoriously against the British under General Whitelock. It was an imposing

spectacle: the bronzed infantry, the naval cadets, and cavalry accompanied the hearse, and trooped slowly up the broad open space that leads up from the sea to the great triumphal arch in the Plaza Vittoria, that commemorates Britain's disgrace.

The rest of these days on the mud I passed in reading Kingsley's "Westward Ho!" It was some years ago, when I was a boy, that I read this charming work last, but I remember well how it made me yearn then for a little ship and a wandering freedom on the salt seas; and yet, now that I was in mid-fruition of that then so impossibly glorious a dream, it seemed quite an ordinary commonplace sort of a life after all; but so is it with all our hopes and their realizations. I hope such philosophizings as the above are not symptoms of my becoming *blasé*, but it is impossible to be gushing and enthusiastic and so on, when one is stuck on a mudbank for days, waiting for a high tide, with half a dozen grumbling, sulky, impatient companions round one—there is not so much of the bold-buccaneering-life-on-the-ocean-wave sort of a feeling in one under these circumstances, as there should be in the skipper of a thirty-ton yawl on a roving commission for two years.

## CHAPTER II.

THE following facts concerning the navigation of the rivers Parana and Paraguay will be of interest to any who purpose ascending these majestic streams. The average rate of the current between Buenos Ayres and Corrientes is two to two and a half knots an hour. The current of the Paraguay is less strong than that of the Parana. The navigation of both rivers is obstructed by constantly-shifting sandbanks. The height of the waters varies much, and irregularly, according to the rains in Matagrosso and the Chilian Andes; sometimes there will be but six feet of water in the passages between the shoals, and at other times the Indian Chaco will be flooded for a hundred miles from the river-bank.

Cuyaba in Matagrosso, the very heart of South America, is the limit of the navigation. The flat-bottomed schooners occupy the best part of a year in sailing there and back. To accomplish the outward journey in six months is considered good work. These vessels, as a rule, have excellent pilots on board, and travel day and night; when there is no wind they pole or warp.

It is only within the last few years that the upper

ivers have been navigated by these Italian golettas, for the exclusive policy of the tyrants of Paraguay closed that portion of the stream to foreign bottoms, and in Paraguay itself vessels of any description were quite unknown. But now the whole majestic river-system of the Parana-Paraguay is open to commerce from the tropic forests and llanos of Matar Grosso to the bleak steppes of the Buenos Ayrean Pampas. The following are the distances by water in English miles from the chief places on the river to Montevideo, which can be considered as at the mouth of the La Plata.

	Miles.
Buenos Ayres . . . . .	150
Rosario . . . . .	430
Diamante . . . . .	507
Parana . . . . .	552
La Paz . . . . .	692
Bellavista . . . . .	911
Corrientes . . . . .	1053
Rio Paraguay . . . . .	1081
Humaita . . . . .	1109
Villa Pillar . . . . .	1133
Villa Franca . . . . .	1189
Formosa . . . . .	1210
Villa Oliva . . . . .	1228
Villeta . . . . .	1294
Asunçion . . . . .	1312
Cuyaba . . . . .	2365

As the current is perpetually contrary, and it is rarely possible to tack against a head-wind, the upward journey is generally tedious for a sailing-vessel ; thus, as will be seen, our voyage from the Tigre to Asunçion, the capital of Paraguay, occupied ninety-one days ; but it must be remembered that, unlike many

of the traders, we invariably came to an anchor at night, and rarely took to poling or warping when there was a calm.

On getting off our mudbank on the morning of the 12th of May, we found that there was but a very light breeze ; but we were anxious to make a start, so, by dint of sailing, poling, and rowing, managed to travel about thirty miles before sunset. On getting out of the Tigre, we ascended the Capitan, one of the numberless channels of the Delta ; it wound much and was very narrow, not more than eighty feet or so broad. All this day we were travelling through a lonely and beautiful forest of willows ; in the midst of it we passed the *quinta* or country house of ex-president Sarmiento, where that hard-working littérateur loves to retire in the summer months.

In the afternoon a large Genoese goletta came up with us, overhauling us with ease. We found that these vessels always did so going *up* the river, their shallow draught and enormous spread of canvas, towering above the trees, being in their favour. But coming *down* the river, especially when any beating had to be done, our draught told, and we were more than a match for any of them. We also spoke two *ballandras* or smart river-sloops bound for Buenos Ayres from Paraguay ; these were laden with oranges, which not only filled their holds, but were piled seven feet high on their decks.

At sunset we dropped our kedge and made a bow-line fast to a tree on shore—thus ended the first day of our cruise to that mystic and beautiful land of Paraguay.

*May 13th.*—The wind being fair, we sailed out of

the narrow Capitan into the wide Parana de las Palmas, one of the mightiest of the mouths of the Parana ; there was quite a choppy sea on this broad water, so the old *Falcon* became quite lively, and began to imagine she was on her beloved ocean once more, but the freshness of the water must have puzzled her.

We had some capital spinnaker drill this day, as on many other occasions on this voyage, for we had to be continually jibing the main-sail and shifting over the former sail, according to the windings of the river, which brought the wind now on this, now on that, quarter. The scenery was as that of the whole of this delta, low broad islands covered with rank jungle and forest, and intersected by numerous streams. Many *camelotas*, or floating islands of a species of lily, passed us ; it is these that join together and form the islands of the delta, binding the soft alluvial soil that is brought down by the river. Quantities of eagles and turkey-buzzards hovered over the rank foliage of the swampy country.

On the 14th of May we reached Campana, when the wind fell away and we were obliged to come to an anchor. We were now becalmed for nearly four days, a prey to mosquitoes and ennui. We passed our time in grumbling, and fishing with cotton and bent pins, in the manner of the Serpentine anglers, for a small fish that abounds here, and which, when fried, we pronounced to be as good as whitebait.

This enforced idleness tried all our tempers, especially those of our lion and the two boys, Jim and Arthur. The two latter were always squabbling, and the lion became so irritable and ferocious that no one

dared to approach him ; he bit and clawed several of us, and growled perpetually. At last he lost his appetite, and showed symptoms of insanity and distinct homicidal mania, so we had to execute him and cast his corpse into the river as an example to the two lads.

While we were becalmed and at anchor a government steam launch came to us from Campana, and the officer in charge took it upon himself to reprimand us severely for not hoisting our ensign before eight o'clock in the morning. As he was rather abrupt in his manner, we became obstinate, and positively refused to show our colours before the orthodox time. The Argentine naval officers are inclined to be rather arbitrary, and are very punctilious about the respect that is due to their flag. A few weeks before this the passenger-steamer *Inca*, of the Brazilian River Company, was steaming down the Parana, flying the Brazilian flag ; there happened to be a small Argentine gunboat hidden in the jungle under the bank, the captain of which, observing that the steamer did not dip on passing, snatched up a rifle and deliberately commenced to fire shot after shot at the Brazilian captain as he stood on the bridge, and it was not owing to want of will, but of skill, that he did not kill him.

On May the 18th a favourable breeze sprang up, and under all canvas, spinnaker included, we reached the port of Zarate before evening. Above on the hill we saw the little white gleaming town of the same name nestling among the fine willows ; so, with Jim following me with a huge basket under his arm, I walked up to it in order to do some marketing, for



we had run rather short of stores. I called at the *capitania* on my way to report myself, for every hamlet on the river has its captain of the port. This functionary here had little to do; there was but one schooner anchored off the town, laden with hard wood, so he kindly offered to accompany me and show me the best stores. We found Zarate to be a considerable place, neat, clean, and full of gringos. We found a French butcher and a French greengrocer, and sent Jim down to the beach, tottering beneath a great load of delicacies, beef, potatoes, pumpkins, apples, and onions. As we wanted to fill two demijohns with Carlon wine, which is the cheap and wholesome beverage chiefly consumed by the river sailors, I was taken by my new friend to the large store of Don Juan Antonio Fernandez, a jovial Spaniard from Ferrol, who insisted on my bringing up my friends to dine with him this evening. After being introduced to the chief people of Zarate, we all drove down in Don Juan's cart with the demijohns of wine and other stores. Jerdein and Arnaud were surprised to see me coming down to the beach with so much state, and more so when I brought a dozen visitors, including two beautiful young ladies, on board to inspect the *Falcon*. These latter were of one of the best families of the place, and could speak French fluently, so we were not obliged to air our vile Spanish. They expressed themselves much pleased with the arrangements of the little boat that had come from Europe, and pronounced everything to be *linda, muy bonita*. We Falcons, wretched widowers that we were, had not spoken to young ladies like these for, it seemed to us, countless centuries, so our hearts

were of course much affected by this invasion of Spanish beauty.

The 19th was another day of sultry calm, and bad temper—so was the 20th; but on the 21st it blew a gale from the south-west, and we sailed at a great speed till nightfall, when we made fast to a tree on the bank, and caught some fine fish for supper.

This day we passed several southward-bound golettas, chiefly laden with charcoal. These Italians sail up to the riachos of the Chaco, and moor alongside the forest, while the crews are on shore cutting down wood and burning charcoal, until they have sufficient to load their vessels and return. Our pilot seemed to know, and hailed, all these skippers from the Boca as we passed each other.

On May the 22nd the wind was northerly, so, after sailing up one reach closed-hauled, we had to come to an anchor again. The shore near us was low and swampy and overgrown with huge reeds. We saw a great many geese flying inland, so I went up the masthead to see what sort of a country lay beyond. Some two miles inland there was a cliff parallel to the river, and I saw that at the foot of this there stretched an extensive laguna, upon which were feeding thousands of ducks, swans, and other birds. The morass extended from the river to the edge of the lake.

Tempted by all this prospective sport, Arnaud and myself took our shot-guns and proceeded to wade through the swamp towards the cliff, and a most distressing wade it was too; we sunk up to our waists in the thick black mud which sent up bubbles of foul-smelling gas as we stepped into it. The mud was

quite cold, so protected was it from the sun's rays by the horrid tangle of aquatic growth that covered it. In places there were two or three feet of water over the mud, and often we sunk so deeply in the slime that we became alarmed, and thought of turning back, for what danger can so terrify the imagination as that of being inextricably stuck in such a slough as this. The reeds and other plants grew far above our heads, so that we could not see where we were going, and had to judge our direction by the position of the sun in the heavens. The mosquitoes troubled us terribly, as did the camelotas that wound their stems round our legs, and seemed to try to drag us down.

After travelling in this exceedingly unpleasant manner for upwards of an hour, we suddenly came to the end of this obstructive vegetation, and were in the open air once more with nothing but a quarter of a mile of bare festering mud between us and the laguna. And now came our reward: geese, turkeys, golden plovers, black ibis, snipe, teal, and some other species of aquatic birds, whose very names I do not know, were feeding here in incredible numbers. They were rather wild, but we managed to kill quite as much as we could manage to carry back through that beastly swamp. We were now both very tired with our exertions, almost faint, but could not possibly sit down in this soft mud, into which our bodies would have sunk never to rise, for to recover one's feet again would have been quite impossible; so we waded across the lake, which was shallow, and to our delight reached dry and solid earth again under the cliff on the other side. Here were some trees that swarmed

with noisy and gaudy-plumaged parrots, of which I shot a few to skin as specimens. We were pretty well done up by the time we got on board, but a bumper of Carlon wine soon set us right again.

While becalmed, or delayed by head-winds, as we often were in the course of this voyage, we generally found that sport of some kind for gun or rod was to be obtained in the virgin forests and savannahs, and on the numerous riachos; so time rarely hung heavy on our hands.

Even on this night we had the excitement of some more and rather unusual sport. As we lay moored alongside the bank, we heard a sound as of some large animal breaking its way through the rank vegetation close to us; there was much noise of snorting and splashing and of breaking reeds. It was intensely dark, so we could not perceive what manner of beast this could be. Some one suggested that it was a tiger, but, considering the marshy nature of the ground, we concluded that it was a carpincho. Of these animals we had already seen several, and knew them to abound hereabouts. The carpincho, I must explain for the benefit of most of my readers, is an amphibious animal that can best be described as a river-pig; its flesh is esteemed as a great delicacy by the riverside folk.

When the unknown monster was, judging by the noise, just in front of us, we fired a volley at it, seemingly without effect; so we reloaded, and standing in readiness, ordered Arthur to strike a blue-light, so as to illuminate the neighbourhood.

Then by the unearthly glare we were surprised to behold staring at us fearlessly with fiery eyes a huge

being, whose black head was topped by two great horns. "It is the devil," whispered Jim in horror, and his fingers wandered nervously about his neck for the blessed relic that some padre of far Mauritius had given him ere he had started on his wanderings over the seas. It certainly looked uncommonly like the traditional devil, and we hesitated, bold buccaneers though we were, to fire again at his diabolic majesty. With a last spurt of haggard flame our blue-light died out, and we were left in darkness. Then was heard Jerdein's gruff voice, "Jim, bring up the bull's-eye." With shaking hand Jim brought it, but absolutely refused to throw the light on to the shore, and reveal once more the outlines of that dread form; so Jerdein, the undaunted one, snatched it from him, and with as much *sang-froid* as if he had been a London policeman flashing his bull's-eye on some small street-arab sleeping on a doorstep, he directed the bright disk of light full on to Satan's coal-black visage, and lo, it was a bull! How a bull had strayed across this league of treacherous morass I cannot say, but there he stood, blinking in the light, and evidently puzzled at our strange conduct.

Jerdein now proposed to send a rifle-bullet into him, cut him up and salt him. We felt much tempted to accede to the proposal; stolen fruit is sweet, and sweeter still is stolen beef, but we hesitated, our insular prejudices, I suppose, making us rather shy of felony; so we sat down and argued the question out in our usual warm and eloquent manner. On one side it was argued that the owner of the bull was a wealthy man and could easily spare him, that cattle-stealing was the custom of the country, "the

most respectable men in the Republic," said Jerdein, "the generals, doctors, statesmen, and the presidents, without exception, have been cattle-lifters in their day, so why not we, when a bull comes and puts himself right in our way?" The bull was spared, however, and in despite of these unanswerable arguments; but I am afraid the high tone of our morality had little to do with our abstention from felony. The fact was the temptation was not a strong one; we had eaten well, and were not hungry, and we had already more beef on board, as it was, than would keep fresh. Had we been hungry or short of meat, I fear that that bull would have replenished our larder. Thus was it that we were preserved from committing a great crime that would have hanged us, even in civilized England, not so many years back.

Feeling very virtuous, we rewarded ourselves with a little dissipation in the way of an evening-party. We brought out the Carlon wine and the concertina, and made merry. Don Juan sang us the songs of Spain and Italy, Jerdein gruff English sea-songs, and Jim even was brought in to give us one of the quaint French-Creole songs of his native island. This will give you an idea as to how we managed to divert ourselves when becalmed; but there was much work to be done at times, as well as sport; wood parties with hatchets had to be sent into the forests occasionally for fuel; meat had to be salted and put in the harness-cask; tobacco-leaf to be rolled into hard cakes; and other such domestic duties had to be performed.

I will not go into all the details of our most tedious

voyage to Rosario. Sometimes vessels occupy several months between Buenos Ayres and that port. One barque, a short time back, being as much as 120 days on the way; but that is, I believe, the longest time on record. The reason is that vessels are delayed by the constant windings of the river, so that the wind that is favourable for one reach is a head-wind in the next; and, as I have before explained, to beat up the river against the wind is impossible, even for a smart fore-and-after like the *Falcon*, save in one or two places where the current is feeble.

Nowhere does the river wind anything like so much as between the sea and Rosario. There is one most tantalizing series of bends about half-way, known as the Nuevas Vueltas, or nine turns. To pass these, unless you pole or warp, you may have to wait for six or seven successive changes of the wind. You run up one reach beneath a slashing pampero; in the next reach this is in your teeth, and there you have to wait at anchor for days, perhaps weeks, until the wind shifts, though you know all the time that, were you once beyond that reach, the pampero would be a fair wind again for a long distance.

Between calms and flaws of wind it is always down anchor or up anchor in this river, entailing no small amount of labour to the mariner. And so it was with us till the last day of May, when, having been twenty days out, we had not accomplished more than two-thirds of the distance to Rosario, and began at this rate to despair of ever reaching Paraguay.

Since Zarate we had passed no town or village, uninhabited swamps and jungles everywhere lining the banks; thus we had run short for the last three

days of sugar, rum, and biscuit, and were anxious to reach some settlement.

On this twentieth day out we did see a town, but only saw it, alas ! for we were not to approach it, as it was on another arm of the river—this was San Pedro, built on an eminence, with a lofty church tower that is visible for many leagues around. This town stuck to us all day, though we were sailing at a good rate—it seemed as if we should never pass it ; it was worse than Netley Hospital is to a yacht going up Southampton Water.

The Parana here wound about so much that it really appeared as if we were going round and round San Pedro ; sometimes it was in front of us, sometimes behind ; now on the port hand, now on the starboard. " And to think," as Arnaud dreamily remarked, " that up there there is plenty of rum and sugar and biscuit," and he sighed deeply.

A large Italian river barque passed us this day ; she was fifteen days out from Buenos Ayres and had been warping through all the calm weather. Later on in the day we overtook her again, for we were then in a bend of the river, up which we could only just lay close-hauled, with our sheets flattened right in. She, of course, could not manage this, sagging to leeward as she did with her shallow draught, but was obliged to take to warping once more. This part of the channel was nearly two miles wide, flowing between plains of lofty pampa grass. We took the ground in the afternoon, running on to it with a violent shock, for we were under all canvas at the time, and the wind was blowing fresh ; we managed to haul the vessel off again easily enough by taking out an anchor astern.



On the 1st of June it blew a strong gale from the S.S.W.—a pampero; now this was a fair wind for us all the way to Rosario, so we made up for lost time, and after sailing for fifteen hours came to an anchor not more than twelve miles below that port. It was not by any means a pleasant day, the rain fell in blinding torrents, and the lightning and thunder were more terrible than I think I have ever experienced. Occasionally squalls of extreme violence struck us, in some of which we were obliged to lower all our sails on deck.

Throughout the day we had three reefs in our main-sail, and that was quite as much as we wanted, though the wind was nearly right aft. We flew by Obligado, a little port, and St. Nicolas, a considerable place, but did not stop to procure provisions; we could not waste so glorious a wind as this.

In the afternoon we came to a point where there was a rapid bend, which we just lay through close-hauled. But at the commencement of it rode at anchor no less than fifteen schooners, some of which we recognized as having passed by us on the way; for none of the river craft could hope to weather that point with this wind blowing.

Having left this fleet behind, we encountered our old friend the *Proveedor*, bound down river; so we saluted each other.

It suddenly occurred to one of us that this was Derby-day in England, whereupon we became greatly excited, and forthwith got up a *Falcon* sweepstake. I little thought on that last Derby-day, when my luck was thrown in with the luckless Devil (Robert the Devil, be it understood), that I should on the next anniversary of the great race be thus scudding

up the majestic Parana before a whole gale of wind. There was a good slice of the round world now between us and the familiar downs.

This day our pilot walked the deck with a prouder gait than usual, for he had now outstripped all the other craft ; it was with a voice of importance, too, that he shouted his orders to tropical Jim, shivering with cold at the tiller, green of complexion and miserable. The very babel of tongues in use on board the *Falcon* during this voyage was curious enough. Spanish, Italian, Genoese, English, and Creole-French were combined into one common language. Jim would occasionally swear in Malay and Hindustani for variety, and a good many Gaurani words crept into our vocabulary later on in Paraguay. This is a specimen of the manner of giving and replying to orders on board ; Jim is at the tiller, pilot looking out :—

*Pilot.* " Arriva !" (Bear away!)

*Jim.* " Arriva it is, sir !"

*Pilot.* " Horsa un poco !—bueno !" (Luff a little !—steady !)

*Jim.* " Horsa un poco, monsieur !—bueno it is !"

We passed a barque this afternoon laden with marble : she was thirty-eight days from Buenos Ayres, so had more cause to grumble than we had. We could not afford to waste this glorious breeze, so broke through our rule, and sailed on till midnight, by which time Don Juan computed that we had made nearly forty leagues, an excellent day's work. We should have reached Rosario before morning, had we not, just as eight bells sounded, run hard up on a sandbank. We had to work diligently throughout

the night before we could haul the vessel off again : we lay out our big anchor, but dragged it home twice, and not till we had got two anchors down did we succeed in hauling her off into deep water. By this time the pampero had blown itself out, and a dead calm followed for twenty-four hours.

On June the 23rd there came light catspaws of wind from the south. We got up anchor and sailed slowly before them against the here strong current. Between the puffs we went astern again and had to drop our kedge. At last, by watching our opportunities as closely as if we had been sailing a race, we reached Rosario, and came to an anchor among the shipping, exactly opposite to the custom-house, being twenty-three days out from the Rio Tigre, not an over smart passage it must be confessed.

## CHAPTER III.

A GENIAL face greeted us as we landed on the quay—that of our ancient host, Keenan, who had heard from the captain of the *Tridente* steamer that he had seen us in the morning, and that we should most possibly be in port before night. Some British stout at his bar soon comforted us after our enforced teetotalism of the last few days; and then, not wishing to waste any precious wind when it did spring up, we set forth to purchase a goodly supply of provisions. Mutton, half an ox at twopence a pound, potatoes, pumpkins, onions, and other luxuries, three demijohns of wine, and a sufficiency of Havannah caña to replenish our rum-cask withal. We also purchased some paint, so as to make the *Falcon* beautiful before reaching the capital of Paraguay.

The tradesman who sold us this addressed his bill to *El Senor Don Milor Inglese, abordo del Jot*. I have seen yacht spelt in many curious ways, such as yatch, yot, and yat, but never before as jot.

As we were shopping we beheld an Anglo-Saxon, a stranger to us, tottering towards us along the pavement in a manner that suggested caña, and much too. He observed us, and brought himself to sud-

denly right in front of us. He swayed about for a few moments, fixing us with his glassy eye, and then with great solemnity uttered the following words:—

“You may, from my walk, imagine I am drunk ; it is not so ; I have corns.”

Having thus cleared his character, he dropped in a comfortable heap on the pavement, and fell asleep.

We procured some Bolivian and Peruvian silver from the bank before sailing, as we were again to visit paperless regions. We made yet another very useful investment, a large accordion and a noisy hurdy-gurdy, which latter reeled off four tunes : the Blue Danube waltz, a Cloche de Corneville gallop, a reminiscence of the Grande Duchesse, and a boisterous, furious cancan. These purchases were made at the instance of our pilot, Don Juan, who said they would be quite necessary in Paraguay, where we should be obliged to give balls occasionally, as is the custom for all distinguished travellers like ourselves.

It was late when we returned to the beach this night in order to go on board. Arthur and Jim were asleep, so could not hear our loud “ *Falcon*, ahoy ! ” We looked for a shore boat to take us off ; boats there were plenty, but no men, and, what was more important, no oars. There was a large low building on the shore, which we could see was brilliantly lit up, and in the which, from the noise that issued from it, a merry baile evidently was under way. Here we thought we might come across some of the owners of the boats ; we were not wrong in our surmise. We went to the door of the ball-room, at which stood two serenos or policemen ; these felt all the people as

they entered, to see that they carried no knives on their persons, for these had to be left outside. This precaution is generally taken at these not over aristocratic public bailes in the low parts of a South American seaport ; neither are they idle precautions, judging from the physiognomy of the frequenters of these places.

We entered the ball-room, a large whitewashed apartment decorated with bits of coloured paper. At the deal tables that served as bars ugly half-breed Hebes vended vile gin and viler caña. The guests were Italian and Greek sailors, all in their shirt-sleeves, and a few young Chiña girls of anything but dazzling beauty, but making up for this by the extreme affability of their manners—some might call them too affable.

We picked up a boatman, and persuaded him, in consideration of a dollar, to desert for a space the buxom partner he was dancing with, and row us off to the *Falcon*. At first he absolutely refused to go, and explained his reasons. He could not trust the lady of his affections by herself—she would go off with some one else while he was away. But we were not going to be left boatless at this hour of the night without an effort, so we explained the matter to the young lady, who stood by fanning her hot face, and implored her to promise her mariner not to elope faithlessly with another lover in his absence. The nymph indignantly refused to bind herself by any such vows, and was walking proudly off with her little nose in the air, when, as a last chance, we reminded her that through her flightiness and obstinacy the boatman would lose a dollar. The mention of so

large a sum startled her; she turned and said thoughtfully,—

“A dollar!”

“Yes,” I continued; “a Bolivian dollar.”

I saw that she hesitated and was lost. She was wrapt in meditation for a while, when suddenly a happy thought suggested itself to her, and she said,—

“Provided that Don Alfonso will promise not to spend any of the dollar until he comes back here to me, I will wait for him.”

The love-sick swain joyfully undertook to do as she wished; so, after half an hour’s diplomacy, we were rowed over to our vessel.

On Monday, the 5th of June, a strong E. by S. wind sprang up, enabling us to proceed on our journey. We were told that it would be advisable to take a bill of health from here for Paraguay, so I called early in the morning at the Paraguayan Consulate. A stupid negro girl opened the door to me, and drawled out that the great Don who represented the inland republic was not in the habit of arriving at his office till eleven o’clock. This day he did not arrive till nearly one. He asked me to follow him in, and, throwing himself into an armchair, deliberately rolled himself a cigarette. Having made himself generally comfortable, he sighed deeply in anticipation of the hard day’s work before him, and asked me in a languid and aggrieved voice what I wished that he would do for me. I explained that I required a *Patente de Sanidad* for Paraguay. “Show me your papers,” he said. I produced my Admiralty warrant and another Spanish document which the captain of

the port of the Tigre had kindly furnished me with.

Now he saw a chance of making an honest (?) penny without much trouble, and, before I could imagine what he was about to do, he pounced down on my papers with his official seal, leaving a huge blue impression on each, and glibly said, "It is a patacon for each seal, senor, if you please; I will now draw you out a bill of health, six patacones—that is eight in all" (thirty-two shillings). I grew wrath at this gross imposition and disfigurement of my papers. Vain it was for me to expostulate, to urge that I had never asked him for these stamps; his only reply was to shrug his shoulders and say, "It is done, sir," all the while holding the documents and admiringly contemplating his handiwork. Evidently he considered that this sealing, whether it was useless to me or not, was a piece of hard work for which he, the worker, must at all events be paid.

However, I would not pay up, whereon he waxed nasty, and commenced to throw doubts on the authenticity of my Admiralty warrant. His objections to this were ingeniously absurd and abstruse. He pretended that he could not understand the Admiralty stamp on it—being a colourless impression standing out in relief, unlike his own gaudy blue concern;—he thought it must be humbug; he rubbed it suspiciously with his finger, smelt it, and at last let me go in sheer weariness of me, and then turned fiercely to inspect a row of Italian river skippers who were waiting their turn, looking like a patient rainbow, for they wore no coats, and their flannel shirts, as is their wont, were of gaudy colours



—one of orange-yellow, one of scarlet, and so on. Leaving these poor fellows to suffer their share of Paraguayan blockheadedness, I hurried on board, and in a few minutes we were under weigh and once more scudding rapidly up the stream.

We anchored for the night off the mouth of our old friend, the Rio Carcaveñal.

We sailed all the next day by the ever-changing swamps and jungles, past mouths of tributary creeks, alive with duck, teal, and geese; by capes and wooded islands and floating camelotes until evening, when we anchored in the midst of a wild and beautiful scenery.

Throughout the 8th of June we were becalmed in this spot. After breakfast Jerdein, Arnaud, and myself, taking with us our shot-guns, revolvers, and knives—a ruffianly-looking crew—started in the canoe in search of game. Coasting down a little way, we came to a narrow opening where a small stream clove the densely-covered bank. Let us paddle up that creek, suggested some one. So we shot our canoe within it, and then, to our amazement, found that we were going, not *up*, but down it; the current, and a strong one too, was with us; the little stream did not flow into the broad river, but out of it. As we floated farther on we passed other smaller riachos branching from this one, they not feeding it, but all drawing away its waters. This seemed an entire reversion of the ordinary course of things, but on a little reflection we solved the problem. In this part of its course the Parana is thirty miles wide, and, as is its characteristic throughout, it flows through an intricate network of channels that divide its islands.

The broad river in which the *Falcon* lay at anchor, two miles wide though it be, is but one of many, is not even the principal of these many branches. Innumerable riachos, like the one we were now descending, wind tortuously among the untrodden jungles that lie between it and the mighty parallel branch, the Parancito to the right, and the Rio Colastine to the left, joining them in unexplored water-labyrinths. This will give some idea of the magnitude of this stupendous Parana, with its myriad shifting isles drifting on to fill up channel here, swell promontory there, till they compel the waters to force out new passages through the great alluvial wilderness.

Lovely, indeed, were the shores we beheld as our canoe idly drifted on with the current, deeper and deeper into the secret haunts of carpincho, waterfowl, and tiger. On the banks was a vegetation of incredible luxuriance, not the jungle as of arid Santiago, but a growth full of sap, gigantic, drawn by warm suns from the dark soft mud—the richest soil in the world—never dry, but overflowed at short intervals by the fat and feeding waters of the Parana. Though satiated with tropical scenery, we could not but gaze with enthusiastic amazement at the beautiful nature around us this warm, still day. It was mid-winter, but of the season there were no signs, no decay, no brown leaf, no death; the leaves and flowers were fresh and bright as of an English spring. Great white lilies, with broad dark leaves, floated on the water; on the banks rose mighty reeds, aquatic plants, and trees of various foliage; but that which made the wonder of the place was the mass of flowering creepers, lianes, convolvuli, and others, that over-

ran all, covering the other vegetation like a great blanket thrown upon the country, climbing over the highest tree-tops, and then hanging over in festoons and curtains, forming the loveliest bowers and dark-shaded caverns of leaves and flowers, such as fairy-gardener could alone contrive ; little sheltered houses with floors of soft brown earth, dwellings for the lucky carpinchos only, fitter to be summer palace of Titania herself, or Undine fresh from the warm river. We landed and wandered awhile in this glorious garden, wondering and enjoying the loveliness of it, and gathering beautiful orchids and flowers strange to us with as much delight as if we had been children once more, until animals that were good to eat came to look at us, when sentiment vanished, and the murderous instincts of the hunter took its place.

We spared the parrots, kingfishers, monkeys, and other innocent inhabitants of this paradise, who, judging from their fearlessness, knew little of cruel man, but shot several monte hens—pretty birds with russet wings, red legs, and green beaks,—a welcome addition to our larder. We also robbed a wild bee's nest, and caught a few pounds of a sort of small silver fish. We drifted on and on down this fascinating little stream that wished to bear us away who knows whither, and into what unknown wilds? and were loth to turn ; but we had the current against us on our homeward journey, so reluctantly we took our oars, and rowed back to the broad river where the *Falcon* lay snugly at anchor, with the blue smoke issuing from the galley-chimney, to welcome us and remind us it was tea-time, and a most appetizing smell of grilled turkey's legs scenting the air around.

Those were happy days we spent on the Parana, days that, when we recall them years hence, will doubtless bring sighs of regret for their vanished pleasures.

I have now related but one of our very many wanderings on these wild shores when becalmed. Tedious this journey was, but not a waste of time. Nothing in all my voyages delighted me so much as this river cruise, for here the traveller when he lands walks in perpetual excitement, is exploring the unknown, and cannot tell what new strange sight will present itself next, what wild beast he may not at any moment encounter.

There is a mystery and a loneliness that pervades the scenery of the Parana, that agreeably affects the imagination ; a mystery—for are not its shores unexplored forests, its sources indefinite, in an unknown region that is still a sort of fairy-land of fable and romance, even as it was when the first Spaniards came and sought the Eldorado ? a loneliness too—the towns on its banks are far apart, and there are no roads across the swamps and jungles that divide them.

For days of journey on this river the traveller sees no sign of human life on the shore, only interminable stretches of palm-groves and forests and morasses. So complete and irreclaimable a wilderness extends on the Chaco shore of the river, that it is only in certain spots, far apart, that the wild Indian himself can find a way to the bank from the inner forests to fish ; the rank dense growth is altogether impassable. It is the utter desert as far as man is concerned, intolerable to him with mosquitoes and ague. If he penetrate it but a little way, awe seizes him to behold

that gigantic network of plants that shuts him in as in a prison. In these dark depths one is oppressed by a feeling of suffocation, of restrained freedom, as in a nightmare.

The sublime Pampas, with its boundless horizon, impresses man with a sense of its immensity, an immensity of freedom; likewise does the solemn Chaco impress one, but with a different sense of immensity, as of an immense prison, a dark tangle of boughs that goes on for ever, and from which there is no escape.

On the 10th of June the rain fell heavily, but a fresh pampero was blowing, which continued for nearly three days, enabling us to make good progress up the river. All this time we were ascending reaches so broad and long, that always in one, often in many directions the horizon was of water, as on the ocean; the water, too, was quite rough on these vast lake-like expanses, so that the little floating camelotes, now hove to (the wind being against the tide), rolled and pitched in the choppy waves, like ships at sea, their broad sails of lily-leaves being all taken aback and showing their light-coloured under surfaces, while the stems, but slender masts, bent to the strong wind.

At last we saw far away on our starboard hand, on the hills of the mainland of the province of Entre Rios, divided from us by leagues of great islands and swamps, the massive cathedral of the ancient city of Parana, and on our port hand, beyond other wastes intersected by a thousand winding channels, the city of Santafé, the two old provincial capitals, nearly thirty miles apart, looking across at each other from the two banks of the mighty river.

It was but little beyond this that we entered the main branch of the Parana, which is the most eastward, skirting the mainland of Entre Rios ; so now we had on our starboard hand no longer swampy deserts, but the Barranca, as it is called, a precipitous range of forest-topped cliff that descends abruptly into the river, so that in many places no landing is possible. This province of Entre Rios, which we beheld for the first time, is undulating and rich, like Uruguay, but its government is atrocious, and the taxation extortionate. The gauchos of Entre Rios have a lawless reputation, so that but few foreigners care to invest their capital on these magnificent pastures. The province has indeed acquired rather an evil name, and its steep frontier cliff seems like a defiant bulwark against the outer world, shutting the land out from the advance of civilization, emblematic of its policy. If recent reports from Buenos Ayres be true, however, things are much improving in this wild land.

We crossed the Banco de la Patientia—the Bank of Patience—a sandy accumulation that in one place fills up the broad bed of the Parana, and through which the narrow deep-water channel winds in sharp zigzags. A wind that is thus fair for one reach may be a head-wind in the next, and the river craft are often delayed for weeks on this well-named shoal.

But our Jobian virtues were not to be tested here ; our luck had changed since Rosario, for the wind was such as enabled us to lay right through the channel, though in some turns we were as close-hauled as was possible. The pilot kept his lead ever going as we skirted the shallows, and he shouted out his *Arriva* !

Horsa! and Bueno! in the most rapid succession. No other sailing craft on the river could have crossed the *Patientia* with one wind, as we did; and Don Juan was ever boasting of this great feat to every skipper and pilot he met during the voyage.

At midday of June the 12th the pampero died away, and a calm, followed by a head-wind, detained us at anchor until the evening of the 16th. We lay close under the Barranca in twelve fathoms of water. This cliff was here of a sort of chrome-coloured earth, full of curious fossils, so we named a steep point below our anchorage Fossil Bluff. The summit of the Barranca was clothed with elephant grass, prickly pears, palmettos, aloes, tree-ferns, and other sub-tropical vegetation. There were no signs of man or his works anywhere on this mainland, but some wild horses approached the edge and gazed at us with evident curiosity.

We went on shore with our guns the morning after our arrival, shortly before daybreak. We beached our canoe at the entrance of a profound and beautiful ravine, or gully, that clove the Barranca. The fossil cliffs, fantastically shaped, overhung it on either side, a rich vegetation covering every irregularity in them that offered a holding-place for roots. Below, a little stream followed the windings of the ravine, losing itself in swamps and pools shaded by willow-groves and dense cane-brakes, the large white lily that is such a feature of the Parana scenery of course covering every sufficiently moist spot.

Arnaud and Jerdein went up to the higher land, where they shot some partridges, ducks, and pigeons. I went down into the swamp, to try my luck with the

carpinchos, whose footprints were everywhere on the soft mud, and whose pig-like splashings and gruntings I heard among the canes. These animals are very shy of man, and it is difficult to approach them without giving notice to their keen senses, so I lay in ambush among some myrtles on a dry spot overlooking the cane-brake, and, with a charge of double zero in my gun, patiently waited for some unwary hog to pass.

As I sat here at sunrise, all the life of this solitude awakened around me. The songs of many birds began to break forth, some sweet of notes, some harsh, as if from little throats hoarse and sore from too much feeding on the hot acrid juices of the tropic berries. As I lay motionless the birds showed little fear of me, considering me a harmless sort of animal; they perched and sang on the bushes close to me. There were funny little paroquets—very gossipy,—staid little grey owls, with big round hazel eyes contemplating me solemnly, very musical canaries, and others. It was amusing to watch their pretty antics in this free aviary. There was one little bright-plumaged fellow, with an impudent orange and pink beak, and cocked-up tail, that was perched on a twig within two yards of me, on one leg, still asleep, not the “early bird” this, but a little sluggard.

Of a sudden rang forth an ominous sound, high up in the sky—ka-waak, ka-wa-a-k—a long-drawn, melancholy, hungry cry that the little birds knew but too well. There was for a moment a fluttering, a frightened chattering, and a trembling among the tiny people, and then there was a dead silence where a few seconds back was so much joyous song. The



little sleepy fellow woke with a start, gave a little shrill scream, and nearly fell into my lap with terror. Ka-wa-a-k, ka-wa-a-k. It was a huge cha-ha, or turkey-buzzard, slowly soaring above. The birds of prey had arisen, and were looking out for their breakfasts among the other "early birds." Ugly-coranchos—the vultures of South America,—kites, eagles, and hawks now crossed the sky over us at intervals. All the bird world was awake. The kingfishers, storks, ibis, and other so numerous fish-eating birds of this region were hunting in the inky slough in front of me, and when one hooked up some fine prize there would be a regular fight over it between three or four of them, accompanied by angry yells.

The ants and the beetles had also now turned out of bed. I was surrounded everywhere by a teeming animal life that was most interesting to watch, and was being lulled into a sleepy reverie, when suddenly there was a crackling of bush, a loud grunt, and there, some twenty yards off, among the reeds, I beheld the dark form of the object of my patient waiting, a carpincho, and a very big one too.

I fired my charge of double zero into him, and quickly reloaded ; but, alas ! this beast is hard to kill. For a moment he was stupefied, the blood was pouring from his nostrils, he shook himself, and with a grunt of pain and rage plunged into the morass, and was far away before I could fire again. I tracked him some way by his blood, but at last came to a place where he had taken to the water, so was obliged to give up the search and return to the *Falcon* with empty hands.

I employed the afternoon in repairing our Berthon

collapsible boat. This was rather an old one, and was pierced by several holes. When a Berthon boat is stove in, it has the advantage over other boats in not requiring a ship-carpenter to repair it. The best person to put it in serviceable condition again is a lady's-maid. I took ours on shore, turned it upside down, and mended it very nicely with one of Arnaud's shirts.

While we were anchored in this place we caught many fish. We passed a stout line from our stern to the shore (about fifty yards), and hung it at intervals with lengths of copper wire, terminating in large-sized hooks baited with beef. We caught for the most part armados and patis, both excellent eating, and averaging about three pounds each. The monster dorados, however, that defied our attempts to catch them, bit many of the fish off our lines, leaving nothing of them but the heads.

The fish we caught were all very fierce, biting at everything they came across when landed on our deck, and barking like dogs. The finny inhabitants of the Parana seem to be all of a very ferocious disposition, and much inclined to bark and bite in this way. It is dangerous to bathe in the River Paraguay and Upper Parana, on account of a tiny fish that infests some parts of these rivers. If you jump overboard anywhere where these voracious little creatures are, a thousand or so will attack you, and simultaneously take a bite each out of you, so that you are worse than flayed, and leave the water one quarter inch thinner all over your body than when you went in, a most unpleasant way of Banting.

On the 16th of June the wind was northerly, but there

were signs of a change of weather in the threatening sky. There is no country where the health and spirits of man are so dependent on the state of the weather as in the River Plate, and this is not difficult of explanation. This is said to be the most electric region in the world, and certainly nowhere else are the phenomena produced by electric disturbance more beautiful and terrible.

No one can reside here, even for a few months, and fail to observe one very general rule in the meteorological changes over this portion of the continent. For days, or for weeks even, the wind will blow from the north, and all this time the weather will become sultrier and sultrier, and more and more oppressive with the pent-up electricity, until at last, to the relief of all nature, there will be a crash of thunder and torrents of rain, and the cold hurricane of the pampero will sweep over the parched land, more or less violent, according to the previous duration of the north wind, and hence the greater or lesser intensity of that exceptional electric condition of the atmosphere.

For four days the norte had been blowing, and now, on the 16th, the weather became intolerably oppressive. The hot parching wind seemed to dry up the pores of the skin, and so enervated us all with its poisonous breath that we were too languid and uncomfortable even to eat our breakfasts, or row on shore, or undertake the slightest exertion. And thus was it, not only with us, but with all animal life. The shores of the river, ordinarily so noisy with the songs of birds and chirping of shrill cicales, and a thousand mingling cries, were as silent now as if

death had suddenly fallen on the land. All nature was in suspense.

In the afternoon the stifling sensation was more intense, the air was suffocating, and the wind entirely died away. The barometer fell rapidly, and at six in the evening a ruddy light came up in the south-west. The tension was about to be broken ; the stillness was full of awe ; then, with a hissing sound, the hurricane came rushing up the river with its accompaniment of plentiful rain, vivid lightning, and loud thunder. The sky assumed an extraordinary lurid colour that was reflected by all the landscape. What was the most remarkable was the instantaneous and violent change of temperature, and general sensation of relief. We were now shivering with cold before the bracing gale, and all our languor was dispelled in a moment.

When the first burst of the pampero, a terrific squall that lasted for about ten minutes, had subsided, we weighed our anchor, and scudded up merrily before the favouring wind, till some time after dark, when we came to an anchor under a promontory of the Barranca, called Cerrito Point.

For several days after this we progressed but slowly, letting go and weighing anchor at short intervals, in consequence of the frequent calms, but occupying the many periods of enforced delay pleasantly enough with various sport on the ever-changing banks, though I am rather surprised that none of us ever caught fever after our long wadings under the hot sun among these poisonous swamps.

The skill of our pilot in guiding our vessel up the intricate channels of the Parana was marvellous. For fourteen hundred miles he knew every feature of the stream, where deep water was always to be found, and

where the channel across the more shifting shoals was constantly changing from one side of the broad river to the other, and had to be discovered by his experienced eye from appearances that conveyed no intelligence to us.

Even with a vessel drawing two instead of nearly



ON THE PARANA.

seven feet, a pilot would be necessary to ascend the Parana. No stranger could find his way among this labyrinth of islands and branch streams; he would most probably take one of the false channels, as they are called, and find that he was ascending one of the many rivers of the Chaco instead of the main network of channels, being brought at last to a cognizance of his error by a flight of arrows from the bank, or a threatening band of naked spear-brandishing horsemen coming down upon his wood-parties.

## CHAPTER IV.

ON the night of the 18th of June, as we lay at anchor under the bank, we heard the noise of a chain rattling through hawse-pipes, and on looking up found that a downward-bound schooner had come to an anchor close to us.

The captain and pilot happened to be friends of Don Juan, honest Genoese sailors, so they came on board of us for an hour or so, and a merry concert, as is the pleasant custom of the Parana on such occasions, was improvised. Most of these Genoese and Neapolitan mariners have rich voices, and know how to use them; all seem to have an inexhaustible *répertoire* in their heads of sea-songs, Venetian gondola chants, and operatic selections, so it is really very good fun to bring up when possible alongside one of these golettas.

Don Juan and the other pilot talked a good deal of shop in the Genoese dialect, as is the custom of their class; how, on one voyage, he sailed from Rosario to Corrientes in so many days; how, on another, he scraped such a bank, and so on.

The skipper of the schooner had a very nasty scar on his forehead. Don Juan, who knew the history

of it, begged him to narrate it to us, which he did as follows :—

“ Five years ago, having saved a considerable sum as captain of river vessels, I purchased a fine new schooner of one hundred tons, built of hard Paraguayan wood. My first voyage was to have been to Corrientes for a cargo of oranges. I left the Boca hopefully enough, being now for the first time owner as well as captain of my vessel. All went well till we had been about a month out ; then, being becalmed, we brought up along the Chaco bank, not far above Goya. It was a hot and lazy day, all hands were below, or lying about the deck asleep, except the cook, who was preparing the dinner outside the galley. Of a sudden, as I was lying in my cabin, I heard such a terrible yell as I have never heard before or since, more terrible than that of the wild beasts. I rushed on deck, and there I saw a scene whose every detail seems to have been instantaneously photographed on the back of my eyes, and there to have remained ever since, for I have only to close my eyes to see it all again. The cook lay dead on his face, with an arrow in his back ; there were about twenty Indians on deck, who had already killed four of my six men, probably even before they had awaked from their sleep. On seeing me, one struck me with his lance on the head, severely wounding, but luckily not stunning me. I leaped into our canoe, whose painter that moment became, I think miraculously, unfastened, and with a shower of arrows following me, drifted down with the tide. Not having a boat with which to follow me, they let me go. I then fainted away, and was picked up by a schooner later

on. Other schooners reported having found my vessel at anchor. On boarding her the sailors beheld a horrid spectacle: my murdered crew lay naked on the deck, hacked in a thousand places, fearfully mutilated. The Indians had taken away all that could be of any use to them—the sails, fittings, and other property useless to them they had cut up or burnt, venting their rage on all they came across, as is their custom. So here I am once more, a poor river captain on another's vessel, with all my savings of years lost."

Such disasters have frequently happened to river craft that moor to the trees on the Chaco shore, and carelessly keep no proper watch; but the Indians are not alone responsible for these outrages. Outlaw gauchos, runaway criminals, and other renegade whites, find too easy an escape from justice by crossing the river to the Indian Chaco, where pursuit is quite impossible. These men are a hundred times more dangerous than the maligned Indian. By the superiority of race, they become caciques and leaders of the aboriginal tribes, and urge them on to the raids and piratical atrocities that are the terror of the frontiers and the river.

One Neapolitan blackguard, who had been long settled in Goya, is now especially famous for his crimes as a brigand chief. On having to fly from Goya, on account of some rascality, he joined some Tobas Indians, married the cacique's daughter, and has now under his command an organized band of bloodthirsty savages, ever ready to carry out the villainies he schemes.

On the night of the 19th of June we came to an



anchor off the little town of La Paz, which is built upon the Entre Rios barranca. Here, though 700 miles from its mouth, the river seems to preserve its volume undiminished. To a vessel anchored in the Parana near La Paz, the horizon both before and behind is a shoreless stretch of water.

On the morrow we went on shore, to lay in necessary stores—wine, meat at three-halfpence a pound, pumpkins, beans, &c. The river being flooded, the butcher's shop on the beach was under water, so we were able to row right inside it to buy our beef, which was highly convenient. We also purchased a quantity of coarse salt for purposes of barter, for this is a valuable commodity higher up the river, and the inhabitants are very glad to exchange eggs, cassava, and other produce, for a few handfuls of it.

As is usual after the prevalence of this wind for some days, the Pampero now gradually died away, the cloudy skies and bracing weather that accompany it disappeared, and we lay at anchor some fifteen miles above La Paz for several sultry, cloudless days, during which time light northerly winds alternated with calms.

We were anchored close to the Chaco shore, here covered with a fine forest; but the trees were joined together with such strong and close networks of leaves and other parasites, that to walk into the country, even with the aid of a machete wherewith to cut a way, was quite impossible.

We did manage, after considerable labour, to clear a small space alongside the *Falcon* with our hatchets and cutlasses, and on this we kept a tremendous fire burning during our stay, doing all our cooking on

shore. As there was no game to be found hereabouts, we employed our time in cutting an abundance of fuel, sufficient for a month, and stowing it in our vessel. We also boiled down the feet of the ox we had bought at La Paz, and manufactured some excellent neat's-foot oil. Charcoal-burning was another of our experiments, and in this we were also highly successful. How much I would have enjoyed this Robinson Crusoe life on the edge of the virgin forest when I was a boy! The water was deep right up to the bank, and the *Falcon* was so close that we were able to jump off and on to the shore. Day after day passed without any change in the weather, and grumblings at our bad luck commenced once more to be heard. The impracticability of penetrating the forest prevented us from obtaining any sport, save a stray shot or two at a carpincho or lobo (fresh-water seal) as they swam by us, and we were anxious to progress to some more open country.

It was not until the 27th of June that the wild Pampero came up once more from the south-west. This strong gale drove us in a few hours into quite another and more tropical country. We hugged the Chaco shore, which soon assumed quite a different character. The land, no longer swampy, became slightly undulating, and the rich vegetation that covered it was not dense, but leaving open spaces and glades that afforded easy passage to man. Tall and graceful palms, the palmistes, and vicunas, were here in thousands bending to the strong breeze; numberless little streams traversed the country, running down beds of golden sands to the Parana. It was a lovely land, inhabited by tigers and other wild beasts

alone, and untraversed save by the roving Indians, who often come down here to fish.

I went aloft, so as to command a more extended view over this charming country. It offered many varieties of landscape; forests of palm were succeeded by leagues of Pampa grass; then there were broad gleaming stretches of sand, and lakes swarming with duck—a land after an Indian's own heart, I should imagine. This Pampero had evidently blown us into a new climate, and a new vegetation; we noticed, too, that its breath was more mild and genial than it had been further down the river. Should the brave south-wester but last another twenty-four hours, we said, we would by that time reach the land of crocodiles and monkies. It did not last twenty-four hours, but left us becalmed this evening off the mouth of the riacho that leads to the town of Esquina.

There was a rancho on the shore close to our anchorage, the inhabitants of which—two men—sat outside their door, and were employed, I believe, without intermission, during the fifteen hours of our stay, the one in playing one sorry tune on a guitar, the other in sharpening a long knife on a stone. In the evening of the 28th, a light Pampero sprang up, which carried us some fourteen miles to the mouth of the riacho called Tala, on the Chaco side of the river.

The next day was chiefly interesting on account of the enormous amount of unparliamentary language, English and Genoese, that was heard on board the *Falcon*.

We awoke at daybreak, and found that a regular gale was blowing from the south-west, so joyfully prepared to get under weigh, anticipating a run of

nearly 100 miles before nightfall. We had weighed our anchor, and were dropping out of the narrow mouth of the riacho before tide and wind under bare poles, when a sudden squall from another direction struck us, and in a moment drove our vessel beam-on to the shore. It was now seven o'clock, and for eight hours, until three in the afternoon, all hands were hard at work endeavouring to drag the vessel off again. It was of no use, she would not move, so firmly was her keel imbedded. We had our big anchor out on splendid holding-ground, but with every purchase at our command applied to the windlass, we could yet do nothing. There was a downward-bound schooner at anchor close to us waiting for a fair wind. Now it is the good custom of the river craft always to assist each other under such circumstances as these, even though the one assisting loses considerable time by so doing. So the captain of this vessel, having first moved her further out in the river, put two anchors down, and then taking a very stout warp to our bows, set all his men to work on his capstan. These schooners are specially provided with capstans of immense power, in view of their taking the ground, as they invariably do more or less frequently on each voyage. But the good fellows laboured in vain : the warp stretched, and our timbers creaked with the strain ; yet the *Falcon* would not budge. The only thing we could now do was to take our anchor out into the river again, and keep a constant strain upon the chain, whereby in time the vessel would eat a channel out for herself. It was horribly annoying, however, to lose all this valuable wind in this way. Our pilot nearly cried with rage, and stamped about

the deck, frequently exclaiming, "If we had run on a bank under full canvas, I should not have minded so much, but under bare poles to stick so fast!"

By putting a watch-tackle on to our capstan-bar, we kept up a very considerable strain on our anchor, and by the afternoon the gale raised a sea that did more for us than all the labour of ourselves and the goletta's crew, with all the capstans and tackles put together. For now the vessel rolled about till she had so loosened her hold in the mud that we were enabled to drag her off a few inches at a time towards the deep water. At last it was only her stern that held her, so, hoisting our heavy canoe on to our bowsprit end, we made her rise aft, and then with a haul altogether on the watch-tackle, we floated her off. After these eight hours of constant hard work, we took three reefs in our main-sail, for the gale had increased rather than diminished in violence, and sailed a good eight knots an hour up the stream till nightfall; the Pampero following us with its usual accompaniments of heavy rain, thunder, and lightning.

The following day the same south-wester was blowing, but with moderate force, so that we were enabled to shake our reefs out and set the spinnaker. After sailing some twenty miles, we came to a portion of the river where navigation is attended with considerable difficulties. The bed of the Parana, here very broad, is filled with an accumulation of ever-shifting sands, just covered with water. The channel across this, which rarely has more than seven feet of water in it, winds considerably, and often changes its position. Our pilot had been informed by a brother *pratico*

who had recently sailed down, that since the last crescente it was necessary to steer from a certain clump of trees, which is a well-known mark to another clump right opposite on the other bank. However, there was some mistake about the direction, for we ran hard upon the sands right in the middle of the river. We let all sail fall on deck, lowered the canoe from the davits, and lost no time in getting out an anchor, but it was not till after three hours of work as hard as that of the previous day, that we got off and continued our voyage. We anchored this night off the riacho of Caraguyta, which is not far from the town of Goya.

We were becalmed here throughout the whole of the 1st of July, so were enabled to go on shore and explore the country awhile, which we now had not done for many days.

On our right hand was now the province of Corrientes, a land of palm forests, swamps, and many lakes and rivers.

On landing, we traversed a broad morass that lay between the river and a fine forest. We saw many alligators basking on the drier spots, but being only provided with shot-guns, could not kill any of them. On reaching the wood, we broke through the lianes and creepers, clambered over the fallen trees, and soon found ourselves surrounded by the veritable South American forest. No words can possibly convey any idea of the solemnity of these virgin wilds. The lower growth was of bamboo, wild coffee, dense lianes, and other plants, while above all towered the ancient and gigantic trees that produce the most valuable hard cabinet-woods of export. We were in the haunt

of beasts of prey and carrion. Storks, eagles, and foul vultures, flew over us with hoarse cries ; parrots screamed, and hundreds of monkeys looked down on us with their human faces from the branches above. We saw many fresh footprints of tigers, and the lacerations on the trunks of trees showing where they had recently sharpened their claws.

While lying at anchor here we amused ourselves with some more exciting sport than usual. In the daytime we succeeded in catching some dorados, a fish we had long been trying to hook in vain, and in the night we organized a general tiger-hunting expedition.

I have already told how these dorados would bite other fish we caught off our hooks : now it was our turn. We happened to have some oranges on board, and these, the pilot declared, were the best possible bait for these voracious monsters. Acting in accordance with his instructions, we baited some large-sized hooks with half an orange each, bending them on stout copper wire trebled ; even through this their sharp teeth would sometimes bite, and we would lose our hooks. In half an hour we caught one great big fellow, five feet long ; we got him into the canoe. In his rage he bit the bulwark till his teeth nearly met in the stout wood. We passed a rope's-end through his gills, and hauling him on deck, examined him at our leisure. The dorado may be described as a gigantic goldfish ; his shape is that of the little creature familiar to us in bowls at home, and his colour is that of the outside of an orange, with a more reddish tint in places ; his mouth is large and cruel, like that of a shark, and I do not doubt that a full-grown dorado

could bite a man's arm off. We managed to catch three of these great fish this day, the smallest of which was three feet long. We cut them into strips, salted and sun-dried them, and found that their flesh was really most excellent eating. We lit a fire on shore, and extracted the oil out of one of these fish, which proved to be the very best material for preserving guns from rust I have ever tried. While we were thus employed, we were surprised to see an English man-of-war steam by; she was the little gunboat *Dwarf*, that was returning from a cruise on the Paraguay.

We found a spot on the shore so thickly covered with the spoor and footprints of tigers, that it was evidently a favourite watering-place for these animals, and not only that, but a fishing-place also, for we saw the remains of dorados lying about. The jaguar is a great fisherman; he crouches in the dense undergrowth by the river bank, and deftly hooks up passing fish with his claw, somewhat in the manner of an English boy tickling trout.

To secure some of the beautiful skins of the South American tiger was a great ambition of ours, so we consulted how best to tempt the wild beasts to visit our neighbourhood this night. We had nothing but salt beef on board now, and as this might not be to the taste of the monarch of the forest, I set forth in the canoe up a riacho to kill some of the shag that abound on the Parana, or any other animals that might be suitable for tiger-bait.

I shot as many black shag as was needful, wounded a carpincho—a beast we never could secure, though we wasted much powder and ball on him, and was



drifting back noiselessly with the oars on board, when I heard a sound on the bank close to me that made my heart suddenly beat somewhat quicker.

It was a loud breathing or snoring of some evidently large animal. I guided my canoe to the opposite side of the riacho, here only about twelve feet broad and quietly made it fast to the rushes. Then I loaded my rifle, which I had with me, and tried to make out who this gentleman enjoying his siesta might be. The jungle was so dense that this was impossible, and I thought it hardly prudent to force my way through and disturb his slumber. He might be of a choleric temper, and object. So not knowing what else to do, I fired straight at the point from whence the noise came, which could not have been much more than twenty feet from me, in the hopes of hitting him in some fatal spot. This may have been rather foolish, but I could not bring myself to go away without letting that conical bullet have its chance. The noise of the discharge, if nothing else, did disturb him, for it was followed by a howl of anger and surprise, and a sound of something crashing through the jungle. I forced my way through the canes to the spot where he had been lying. There was his bed, a large one, too, and still hot with his body, but I could see no blood or other signs about to show me that my shot had taken effect.

We cut open some shag, and hung them, together with some dorado-flesh, on the branch of a tree some three feet from the ground, and close to the watering-place I have mentioned. At sunset the forest resounded with a continuous and awe-inspiring din, the chorus of wild beasts, terrible and exciting to one

who hears it for the first time ; the shriek of tiger and puma, the drum-like chatter of baboons, and strange and weird cries that we had never heard before.

Jerdein, Arnaud, and myself, settled ourselves comfortably among the branches of three separate trees, each armed with rifle, revolver, and knife. We were so disposed as to be able to converge our fire on any animal that should come near our bait.

We remained perfectly noiseless in our respective trees for three hours. Then, I imagine, we began to consider our position ridiculous, and our attempt at jaguar-catching a vain amusement, but no one liked to speak first and suggest this. The wild beasts seemed now to have turned in, except one, who occasionally still disturbed the still night with a wild, sardonic laugh, full of insanity and cruelty, the most blood-curdling cry of the forest, that no one would imagine to be uttered by a bird ; yet so it was, for this was the screech of the foul buzzard of South America.

Four hours passed away, and we still remained on our perches, immobile and silent, when suddenly Arnaud sneezed. The charm was broken : we burst into a simultaneous Homeric peal of laughter, and, with no dissenting voice, moved an adjournment on board the *Falcon*.

The tigers never came that night, for the bait hung untouched in the morning. Had we possessed a *live* sheep or other animal to tie up as bait, we might have had better luck.

On the morrow the north wind was still blowing,

so I was enabled to visit a large island covered with trees that was near our anchorage.

I found it to be densely overgrown with bamboos, mangoes, coffee, and venerable *Quebrachos Colorados*, of whose hard red wood—so heavy that it sinks in the water like lead—the river schooners are constructed. Beautiful orchids or air-plants in blossom hung from the trees like aerial gardens. Of these we tore down some, and stuck them on our own rigging, where they flowered and thrived for some months, so that the *Falcon* presented quite an æsthetic appearance. On the soft soil of this island were the fresh marks of tigers and deer, but we did not come across the animals themselves. If we had only brought some dogs with us, I believe we should have found some good sport among the larger game; not to have procured some at Buenos Ayres was a great oversight on our part.

This morning's bag was composed of two turkeys, two monkeys, some parrots, and an alligator or caiman. The turkeys and parrots were shot for the larder, the alligator and monkeys for their skins, though alligators' tails are esteemed as a delicacy in Paraguay, and a dish of young monkeys is not to be despised by any one. The rather mixed contents of the bag suggested a discussion among us as to what sort of a banquet we could turn out on board, should the President of Paraguay, or some such other grandee, honour us with his company at dinner, given the materials generally within our reach. The following composition was the result. It certainly has a local colouring, and I think does credit to our taste.

## "FALCON" MENU.

## DINER À LA PARANA.

*Hors-d'œuvres.*

Locusts.

Sardines en Diable.

*Potages.*

Purée de Haricots.

Boa-constrictor en Bouillabaise.

*Poissons.*

El Dorado.

Anaconda.

*Entrées.*

Curry de Singe.

Salmi de Paroquets.

*Rôtis.*

Carpincho.

Alligator au beurre noire.

*Légumes.*

Courges.

Pommes au naturel.

*Entremet.*

Omelette au rum.

## DESERT ASSORTI.

We unfortunately never had an opportunity of preparing this grand collation. The two monkeys I shot were of large size, and with beautiful glossy, black skins that would be valuable in England. These curious animals were very numerous on this island, and seemed to be quite fearless of man; they sat in an innocent, inquisitive way upon the branches all around, looking at me with folded arms, and following me along the tree-tops as I walked along. After killing these two, I felt too much like a murderer to continue this highly unsportsmanlike amusement, but sat down and contented myself with watching their extraordinary acrobatic feats among the rope-like lianes of their native forest.

## CHAPTER V.

ON the 6th of July we came to a portion of the river where, for the first time, we saw both banks at the same time, the wilderness of El Chaco being on one side, the not less wild province of Corrientes on the other, no islands as usual intervening between us and one or other of the two mainlands. We beheld at last, after all these labyrinths of isles and channels, the whole volume of the Parana concentrated in one stream ; and a noble river it seemed here, of considerable depth, and I should say about two miles in breadth.

At nightfall we came to an anchor off a rancho of mud and bamboo on the Corrientes beach. It was the first sign of man we had seen since we were off the riacho of Esquina, ten days before. The owner of this house came forth when he heard our chain rattle out, and endeavoured to strike up a conversation with us. But we were sulky, and stood on our dignity at first, not responding heartily to his friendly overtures—for, if the truth be told, we felt very annoyed and aggrieved when we beheld this hut and its holder.

We had lately taken to looking on all these deserts

and forests as our own happy hunting-grounds, and this fellow seemed to us an intruder on our solitude. He at any rate owed us a humble apology for having dared to build himself a house in the centre of our preserves, and just in front of our night's anchorage too.

But when he came off to us in a little canoe with a peace-offering of cassava, sweet potatoes, and eggs, and only wanted a little bag of coarse salt in exchange, we melted, and magnanimously forgave him.

We went on shore, and found that there were several ranchos behind his. Round one was a plantation of orange-trees covered with fine ripe fruit. Wishing to purchase some of these, we went up to the hut, and found there two women swinging lazily in grass hammocks, smoking huge cigars. We addressed them politely, but found they could not understand a word of Spanish, being only cognizant of the Indian dialect Guarani. However, our first acquaintance could speak a tongue that bore some distant relationship to Castilian, and acted as interpreter. The women drawled out in the soft vowels of the Indian language that we could have oranges at a dollar a thousand, but must gather them ourselves. As it was nearly our dinner-time, this we could not do, but informed them that we would willingly pay more if they would pluck them for us. This they declined to do; they were far too comfortable there in their soft hammocks, dreamily watching the wreaths of smoke as they rose from their mouths, to think of descending, were it for forty dollars. But a happy thought occurred to the inspired Jerdein, and he said,

"Fair ladies, if you will but pluck for us 500 oranges, we will give a grand ball in this village to-night, at which we will hope to have the pleasure of seeing you."

When this was interpreted into Guarani, we could perceive by the expression of their faces that they were at last moved by our entreaties—the prospect of a ball excited them greatly; but they were not to be humbugged, so these indolent beauties (beauties by courtesy) would not get out of their hammocks till they had inquired into all the details of our entertainment. "But there is no music here," urged one. "O yes there is," explained the persuasive Jerdein. "There is a concertina, and a box full of dances; you turn a handle, and out they come," and he demonstrated in pantomime the action of a hurdy-gurdy. "There will also be gin," said our interpreter, "and tobacco," continued Jerdein. Before all these temptations the fair ones could not but yield, and they consented to pluck us our oranges on the understanding that—no oranges, no ball.

This little settlement is called Rincon de Sota, and the inhabitants of it are about as numerous as the letters of its name. The poverty of the place can be imagined when I state that it does not support either a commandante or a judge!

As we had progressed northward, we perceived that the population became more agricultural in its pursuits; thus these poor half-breeds of Rincon de Sota cultivated the ground around their bamboo huts with considerable care, producing cassava, potatoes, oranges, and maize—very unlike the shepherd aristocrats of the Pampas, who scorn to till the soil.

Of the dozen inhabitants of this little place, about nine were of the other sex ; these, on hearing of the coming ball, became excited to a degree, and forthwith set out to wash themselves in the river, and otherwise adorn themselves in a rather public manner for the great event.

The ball was to be held in the rancho of our first friend, which was large and had a fine mud floor, admirably adapted for the purpose. At about nine in the evening we went on shore with the concertina, the barrel-organ, and three bottles of gin. We, too, were in ball-dress, that is, we wore top-boots, had sailors' guernseys on, handkerchiefs round our necks, and revolvers and knives at our backs. None other but ourselves wore boots. We left Jim to keep watch on deck with a musket during our absence, and Arthur, with a cutlass as big as himself, stood by our canoe on shore, for of course we could not know that our new friends were not of a piratical and brigand disposition ; anyhow, this is a rough and dangerous part of the river, and it was as well to be prudent. But all went on well, and there was no grand finale of stabs and shots to mar the harmony of the evening.

Women as well as men smoked long Paraguayan cigars all the time they were dancing, as is the custom of this province, where the smallest child indulges freely in the strong green weeds, and where a baby crying in its mother's arms is soothed by having a plug of tobacco thrust into its mouth. Our host was an *Indio manso*, or tame Indian—a very ugly but sprightly old gentleman, who, becoming *medio obscuro*, as Don Juan euphemistically termed his condition, sat in a corner, with an expression of intense



satisfaction on his leather features, clapped his hands, and exclaimed at intervals, "*Es muy superior! muy superior!*" He, at any rate, appreciated our efforts to amuse the population. His ugly squaw was highly pleased with a keepsake I presented to her, being an old wooden pipe. The barrel-organ, of course, was an object of great interest; every one insisted on having his turn in revolving the handle, and the smiles of astonishment, pride, and delight that illumined those simple ugly faces when a real *bond-fide* tune resulted from their efforts, were worth seeing.

It was not until the evening of the 12th of July, having been sixty-one days out from the Tigre, that we came to an anchor off the town of Bellavista. The aspect of the scenery around us at that moment was extraordinarily beautiful. We were between the sun and the moon; on our left hand was the former setting gloriously behind the Chaco, throwing over all that wild country a peculiar crimson glare; while to the left of us, over the Corrientes shore, hung the full moon, casting a silver light upon the white houses of the ancient city. Very remarkable was the contrast of colour between the two coasts under these circumstances, and apt to recall to one's mind the still sharper contrast in another respect between the two lands thus separated by the mighty river. On the one hand the Spanish settlements, the countries of the men that live in houses; civilization of a poor kind, but civilization all the same, and progressive. On the other hand barbarism, for there lay the vast Indian hunting-ground of El Gran Chaco, where the aborigines defy the white man, and wage perpetual war against him. For three centuries the two races have

looked at each other across the broad Parana for upwards of a thousand miles of its course with the same irreconcilable hatred; and nothing so strikes a stranger when standing in the streets of such a town as Corrientes, with its tramways, its men in black coats and top-hats, and other outward signs of civilization, as to look across the gleaming Parana and remember that that fair country so near to him is yet the uncontested territory of the savage, as much as it was before the Spanish keels first clove the waters of the River Plate.

We had to remain at Bellavista throughout the next day in consequence of a calm. This town, though the second of the province, is a wretched place, but beautifully situated on the summit of the Baranca, commanding an extensive view over the Parana and its islands, and the Chaco beyond.

The river as seen from the Plaza is very majestic; even here, and far above this, it stretches in such broad, seemingly-shoreless expanses, that an explorer coming from overland upon its banks would easily imagine that he had reached some bay of the sea, were it not for the freshness of the water. Bellavista is embowered in a grove of oranges; each house is surrounded by a plantation of these dark-foliaged trees, now covered with golden fruit. No region in the world so abounds with oranges as do the province of Corrientes and the Republic of Paraguay. It is not worth the while of the people to gather them, save where the trees are in the vicinity of the river-bank, for there it is easy to dispose of them to the Italian schooners that sail up the Parana at this season to take in cargoes of the fruit.

At Bellavista we were enabled to lay in a fresh supply of beef, salt, maté, wine, and vegetables. We also covered our decks with mountains of oranges, which we devoured from morning till night, to the horror of Don Juan, who told us we should all die of a horrible death if we committed these excesses. Said he, "It is the fever (chuchu) season now on the river; nothing gives a man fever so soon as eating oranges."

But we would not be persuaded, being unable to see any connexion between malaria and oranges, and we did not catch fever, whereas abstemious Don Juan did, though but mildly.

After leaving Bellavista, we sailed for two days, when the wind rather suddenly veered to the north, and we were obliged to anchor off the mouth of a large riacho that penetrated the Chaco. This change caused the thermometer to rise from 65° to 85° in the shade, within a few hours. In the canoe I ascended this riacho for some miles with Jerdein. A forest of fine trees, but impassable on account of the dense undergrowth, lined either bank. At last we came to an encampment of some twenty wild-looking half-breeds and tame Indians, who had two long canoes moored to the bank. They were occupied in cutting down bamboos for sale in Bellavista, where they are much used for building and other purposes. They were fairly armed with old-fashioned muskets, knives, and bollas, to defend themselves in case of attack by marauding Indians. Their wives and children were with them, and performed all the domestic duties of the little camp. When the dogs had been quieted with sundry kicks from their owners, and

objurgations which I suppose were Indian curses, we saluted each other, and entered into conversation. They told us there was an open savannah some three leagues up the riacho, where there was great plenty of game and wild beasts, but that by the bank between us and that, on a "campo muy rico," there was a *tolderia* or village of Tobas Indians, who were far from being friendly-disposed to the white man. One old fellow that was spokesman of the party was a professional tiger-hunter; he had an ugly and many-scarred dog with him that was the hero of a hundred fights with the jaguar, and which he said he would not sell for five ounces of gold.

In the night of the 18th of July, a gale of wind sprang up from the south-west, and raised such high waves that we rolled about at anchor as if we had been lying in the Solent instead of on a river 1000 miles from the sea.

On the 19th the pampero was still blowing with such fury that we sailed under mizzen and fore-sail alone, going very fast even under that short canvas. There was quite a heavy sea running in places, so that we felt anxious, for to have run on a bank under these circumstances might have involved the total loss of the *Falcon*. Hereabouts, too, the bottom is not altogether composed of sand and soft mud, but blocks of *tosca* rise up at intervals; this is a sort of natural concrete, nearly as hard as rock.

But the pilot was very careful, sounding every moment as we crossed the perilous shoals with often not more than half a foot of water under our keel,\* we were continually turning and jibing our sails, till at last we were greatly relieved by Don Juan saying,

as he coiled his lead-line on the hatch, "All right now, we have three fathoms of water all the way from here to Corrientes." Before dark we came to an anchor off the city of Corrientes, the capital of the province of the same name.

This is a curious old place, rising from a shore of rough, lumpy tosca. Both beach and town have a slovenly, unkempt appearance; the streets are of loose sand, with big stones and deep holes here and there, straight, lifeless streets fragrant with the many orange-trees, unlit by night, and then not over safe to promenade in, for the population of Corrientes has a lawless, murderous reputation.

Several campaniles of old Jesuit churches dominate the dilapidated-looking city, and there is a college, a really fine building, that would be worthy of a European university town. I saw the pupils turning out from lecture, when I was here. They were of the age of English scholboys, small boys, too, for the most part, but in their manners very different indeed from those at home. There was none of that boisterous, tumbling out of school—those irrepressible animal spirits that distinguish the British urchin—these sallow youngsters walked out staid and solemn, old men in all but years, each, even the smallest, puffing away at a gigantic native cigar.

On landing in our canoe on the tosca beach, we found ourselves in the midst of a crowd of half-naked women washing clothes and chattering, as is the manner of washerwomen all over the world, very fast in the soft Guarani. A little higher up on the beach was an encampment of men, women, and children, whose barbaric costume and hideous faces be-

tokened them to be Indians of the Chaco. They were Guacurus, a ferocious tribe, and spoke a harsh, guttural language, sounding very unpleasant after the tongue of the civilized Guaranis. These Guacurus had come over the river in a huge canoe which they had drawn up on the beach ; they had brought firewood and skins of wild beasts to exchange for salt and other necessities. They were of a very dark colour, with long coarse black hair hanging down their backs ; some had tiger skins, but most had merely filthy blankets wrapped round them. The women were, if possible, uglier than the men. The married women were distinguished from the maidens by large round patches of black or dark-blue paint under their eyes, giving each one the appearance of having received two very thorough black eyes at her husband's hands.

On traversing several deserted streets, we came to the market, a fine, covered building that surprised us. Here were nothing but women, all ugly, squatting on the ground with little lumps of oranges, mandioca, sugar-cane, tobacco, and other farm produce before them. All, even down to the youngest child, were smoking cigars. This is indeed the land of tobacco ; every baby is an inveterate smoker. Excess in this drug is universal here, and yet this people is as healthy and as long-lived as any in the world. The anti-tobacco fanatics should come over here to study the effects of nicotine ; either they abuse an innocent plant, or the South Americans enjoy phenomenal constitutions ; or, as I, from experience in my own case, imagine, smoking is less injurious in some climates than in others, and in tropical America is

almost entirely innocuous—nay, even necessary to health.

The store-keeper who supplied us with stores at Corrientes was a jovial old Genoese ex-sea-captain who now owned several craft. He invited us to lunch on board one of his schooners the morning after our arrival, so we were enabled to study the construction of the Parana goletta. Built entirely of hard and imperishable wood, these vessels practically last for ever. We noticed that this one, as is often the case, was entirely rigged with ropes of plaited hide; these are very strong and also almost imperishable, provided they be kept well greased. This schooner had just sailed down from the Misiones on the Alta Parana, from whose immense forests she had taken in a cargo of valuable timber, and had put into Corrientes for a day before proceeding south. Great blocks of lapacho, quebracho, and cedar filled her hold, squared from trees of considerable size, for many were more than a yard each way.

Corrientes is evidently a great mart for the Indians, for, as we enjoyed our polenta and macaroni on the mahogany-coloured deck, we perceived several clumsy native canoes coming over from the Chaco, laden chiefly with palm-trees, from the split hollowed trunks of which the very serviceable tiles are made, which roof so many houses in this city.

Corrientes is really more an Indian than a Spanish city, for not only do the savages from the Chaco often throng its streets, gazing with wonder at the gaudy blankets and cheap trinkets that are exhibited in the stores to attract them, but, as far as I could

judge, quite three-quarters of the inhabitants are Guaranis, and speak that tongue.

Arnaud and myself were going off to the *Falcon* this same evening at about eleven o'clock. We stood on the beach and hailed her until we were hoarse. For upwards of half an hour we shouted, so that we woke most of the Indians camping round their fires. All the cocks in Corrientes commenced to crow, all the dogs to bark, and the police to yell challenges and answers to each other in different parts of the city, as is their custom, to show that they were awake and heard the disturbance, and, as is also their custom in a row, they took very good care not to come anywhere near us. Though we had stirred up a din as of many revolutions, our sleepy crew would not wake ; so, as there was no one else about, we applied to the Guacuru Indians for assistance. I gently poked one with a stick, whereon he rolled out of his blanket with a grunt. I tried to explain to him that we wished to go on board the *Falcon* in the canoe of his people, a huge craft that required at least four men to row it. He would not understand. Then I showed him a silver dollar, and he evinced signs of intelligence, and proceeded to wake up some of his fellows. But now a difficulty arose. The squaws and children were already awake and sitting up in their blankets, staring at us with their black, beady eyes, but it seemed that our friend was too gallant to ask the ladies to row us over, or perhaps too jealous to trust these questionable beauties with us. Anyhow, he insisted on trying to wake the men. But these sons of the tropic forest had, after completing their barter, invested most of their gain, as is



their wont, in the fire-water of the white man, the insinuating square-face gin. Dead drunkenness is the only term that can express the condition of most of these noble savages. Our friend, who was comparatively sober, failing to awake the others, went up to the cacique, a huge ruffian, rolled up in a white blanket, and reclining his head on a half-empty bottle of gin as a pillow. He proceeded to stir up this great man with a ceremoniously and respectfully administered kick in the ear, as befitted his high station.

The savage, with his wild-beast instincts, fearful of danger in every sound, leapt to his feet in a moment, as if he had received an electric shock, with a sudden start and a horrible yell, as his right hand clutched his long knife. Having appeased him, our Indian tried to explain our wants, and put before his chief all the arguments in our favour : how many drams of gin could be purchased for a dollar, and so on. But the cacique was too far gone to understand anything, even gin ; so, after glaring savagely around with his blood-shot eyes, and muttering sundry guttural blood-curdling remarks in Guacuru, he fell down and relapsed into insensibility. Finding that we could not get a boat, we presented our friendly barbarian with a few cigars, and repaired to an almacén to beg a bed, having succeeded in awaking the savages, dogs, cocks, police, and citizens of Corrientes—all indeed save our sleepy boys.

I have already alluded to the many curious substitutes for coins that a South American store-keeper will give you in charge, such as the vales or IOU's, tramway tickets, chopped up Bolivians, and so on. In Corrientes and all the Paraguayan towns you will

receive in lieu of small change, as I found on paying my hotel bill the morning after our adventure with the Guacurus, boxes of matches, bundles of cigars, and drinks; very cumbersome, save perhaps the latter, which are a sufficiently portable currency; and yet have we not seen men totter even beneath the weight of these?

On going down to the beach, we walked over the prostrate forms of the still "drunk and incapable" Indians, whose lank, black locks were alone visible above their dirty blankets. The squaws, however, were awake, smoking cigars and sadly contemplating their lords, who, in a night's spree, had thus wasted all that the women had earned by months of hard work, reserving nothing wherewith to buy the little household necessities, such as salt to flavour the Sunday joint of alligator-tail, a blanket for the new baby, or tobacco for the old wife.

Our boy Arthur was an independent and mutinous young ruffian, who, like most of us, would not hearken to and profit by the experience of his elders. So it happened that, in consequence of neglecting the sage advice of Jerdein and myself, he received a rather practical lesson on the night after our arrival at Corrientes. Having obtained permission to stroll about the town for a few hours in the afternoon, he proceeded to dress himself out in the costume in which he most fancied himself, being the Sunday apparel of a North Sea fishing-boy: thick pilot coat, woollen stocking round the neck, and so on, more adapted to the Arctic regions than to latitude 26°. Thus accoutred, and with the biggest cigar he could procure in his mouth, he commenced to roll about Cor-

rientes in the regular Jack-ashore style. To cut the story short, he broke his leave, and never returned all night. We went off in the canoe to look for him in the early morning, and there on the beach we beheld a miserable, half-naked object that we could not at first recognize as our gallant crew. He had nothing on but a pair of trousers. His face was swollen and bloated, and his teeth chattered with cold. We took him on board, where he explained, as well as he could, but vaguely, what had occurred. He said he had been drugged by some Spanish sailors in a public-house, then robbed of his coat, money, boots, hat, belt, knife, pipe, &c., and cast out in an insensible condition to pass the cold, dewy night upon the beach. He had been afraid to approach the Indian fires when he awoke, and so must have had a very uncomfortable time of it.

## CHAPTER VI.

NORTHERLY winds detained us in Corrientes for several days, so we were enabled to see a good deal of the neighbourhood. One excursion we made is worthy of mention. This was to the Colonia Resistancia, a small settlement of Italian agriculturists in the Chaco opposite Corrientes, one of the few spots where the white man has established a footing in the Indian hunting-grounds beyond the river. Don Felice, a jovial store-keeper of Corrientes, who owns property in the Resistancia colony, invited us to go there with him ; so one fine morning we embarked in a small, lateen-sailed boat that carries passengers across the Parana to the new settlement. We were very much over-crowded, there being twenty-six of us altogether. With the exception of ourselves, all were Italian colonists. There were several pretty girls among them, and two musicians to enliven our journey with guitar and flute.

The voyage was a stormy and even a perilous one, for the north wind blew hard. In the middle of the broad river a choppy sea was running, and the waves toppled over the sides into our deep-laden vessel in most alarming fashion. We were all soon drenched ;

the women shrieked and prayed, whereon Don Felice at the helm shouted to the musicians, "Toca la musica! toca la musica!" thinking with lively strains to soothe the terrified damsels; but, alas! the harpist and flutist, haggard and pale with sea-sickness, could not even talk, far less harmonize.

Then our admiral drew forth a bottle of rum, and ordered tots to be served round to all hands. This inspired the crew with greater confidence, and a pretty little Italian girl sitting next to me so far recovered as to wipe the tears from her eyes, draw forth her fan, and commence a little flirtation with the writer, which Don Felice noticing, he cried out, "Bravo!" and called public attention to the pluck of the Donna Julia, holding her forth as an example to the rest, at which she blushed and simpered, not unbecomingly, behind her fan.

As a matter of fact we were not very far from foundering on several occasions during this voyage, but, baling out all the while, we managed to reach the other side of the broad, rough Parana, and entered the calm waters of a riacho that pierced the jungle of the Chaco. All these amiable Italians now recovered their spirits, and fanning, flirting, laughing, and music became once more the order of the day. After ascending the riacho, along whose banks basked many alligators (yacarés) for some miles, we came to the colony. We found quite a decent road traversing it, and seeing the tidiness, cleanliness, and signs of industry everywhere around us, we did not require to be told that this was not a native but a foreign colony.

The settlement consists of small farm-allotments,

whereon a hard-working, handsome, cheerful race of Piedmontese, Tyrolese and Lombards raise from a fertile soil nearly every produce of the temperate and sub-tropical zones. Round each pretty house is a flower-garden and a little plantation of potatoes, turnips, peas, a common sight at home, but a very rare, and therefore pleasing one in this republic. Beyond these are the fields of maize, plantations of cotton and sugar, groves of oranges and bananas, and the cleared pastures for the cattle. None of these pleasant people are rich, but all are in a comfortable position. They are sufficiently numerous to defy the Indians, and live contentedly and undisturbed, save for the impositions of a vile government.

After shooting some partridges and pigeons, we were taken by Don Felice to the log-house of the one Englishman of the colony, Mr. Barnes. The reception we received from this gentleman, his wife and charming daughters, was most pleasant to us. I believe we were the first Englishmen who had ever visited them in their remote home in the backwoods. Mr. Barnes is an old Australian colonist, and has been settled here for three years. He told us that when he first landed in this wild spot, he was terrified and awed by these dense and mysterious forests and jungles, accustomed to the roughest countries of Australia though he was, and that it was long before he and his family could become reconciled to the unbroken noise of the wild beasts, parrots, and monkeys that ever resounded around them.

On sailing back to Corrientes on the 25th of July, we found that the north wind had freshened to a strong gale, so a shift to the southward within a few

hours was more than probable. "Norte duro pampero seguro" is the proverb of the Parana pilots. This was one of those hot, electric days that accompany the termination of a northerly,—90° in the shade, 125° in the sun, a good temperature for midwinter ; but this had been an exceptional season for these latitudes, "un anno de norte," as Don Juan called it in disgust, and very unfavourable for the ascent of the Parana. "Un anno de crescente," too, it had proved, for the river was exceptionally high, and the larger game had retreated inland from the flooded shores of the Chaco. Hence the comparatively poor sport we had encountered. As a rule the river-banks swarm with deer, tigers, and other animals.

On the morning of the 26th of July there was a dead calm. It was terribly close and hot, a silence as of death hung over all nature, and man and beast lay listless and depressed in suspense beneath the incubus of the coming storm. Suddenly a dark mass of cloud rose rapidly from the southern horizon, and then the fierce pampero burst down upon us with great fury ; its first blast was hot as of a furnace, being the dry air of the recoiling norte ; but in an incredibly short time this had passed, and instead of an atmosphere of the Saharah when the simoon blows, we had above us the cloudy rainy sky of the autumnal equinox at home, and the cold, moist breath of the wind in our faces was exactly that of our bracing, blustering south-westerners of old England. On no occasion, even in this country, had I experienced so very rapid and great a change in the climate as on this day. I have already remarked how very trying these sharp contrasts of temperature are to the delicate, but even the

strong suffer from disorders consequent on them. A prolonged norte produces a peculiar nervous irritability, sometimes verging on insanity, especially among the native population.

It is well known here that crimes are more frequent, and the prisons fuller during the prevalence of this wind. It is not at all uncommon for men to be seized by a very strange and fatal disorder on the sudden change from a norte to a pampero. There were two cases of this in Corrientes on this occasion, the symptoms in both being as follows. As soon as the cold blast of the pampero fell on him, the sufferer, up to then in perfect health, experienced a sudden chill, turned black and blue about the mouth, and died in an insensible condition in about half an hour from the first seizure, putrefaction following with exceptional rapidity.

And now that I am on the subject I may mention that, notwithstanding the great purity of the air in the River Plate, there are certain diseases peculiar to these regions, that can only be put down to the extraordinary electric conditions of the atmosphere so frequent here. There is a species of paralysis alarmingly common both among natives and foreigners, which is called the *aire* or air-stroke, from its being popularly supposed to be caused by a sudden current of air possessing peculiar properties. Two cases, both Englishmen, came across my own notice, which may serve as examples. In one case one corner of the mouth was twisted up, so that the sufferer cannot speak without using his fingers to open it; in the other, one eye is half-closed. In both cases the attack came suddenly, feeling like a sharp blast of cold air.



Sometimes this paralysis is incurable, and, as a rule, lasts for some years. In some rare cases it has proved fatal.

If what one hears from good sources is to be believed, the *aire* must really be brought about by a current of electricity, for there are authentic cases of two men sitting together being simultaneously seized by this strange and invisible enemy, the one being killed on the spot as by lightning, and the other paralysed in some limb. People here have assured me that not only will the *aire* attack men and animals, but will break a bottle or glass that may be standing near. This, if true, and my informers certainly seemed sincere and positive, points more than anything else to electricity as being the origin of this strange seizure. Mild forms of *aire*, such as a sudden swelling and paralysis of one side of the neck, are of such frequent occurrence that we had as many as three cases on board the *Falcon*, and our pilot in anticipation had provided himself with the remedy for this before coming on board, for such is the explanation of the roll of sulphur I have mentioned as being an inexplicable item of his luggage.

Don Juan, having been struck by *aire* on the neck while with us, applied this remedy with unmistakable success. He rubbed a piece of sulphur backwards and forwards over the affected part, whereon a crackling as of electricity was distinctly heard. After a time it ceased to give out this sound, and he took another piece of sulphur, and on rubbing his neck with it the crackling was again distinguishable. He then pointed out to me that the pieces of sulphur thus used had undergone a change, being quite brittle

and easily crumbling to powder in the hand, as if they had undergone disintegration in consequence of the process. He explained that all the aire had now gone out of his neck into the sulphur. However this may be, one thing was certain, an instantaneous cure was effected.

The well-known fact that the merest scratch is dangerous in this country if unattended to, frequently resulting in mortification and death, and always healing with great difficulty, may also not improbably be accounted for by the same highly electric state of the air; we know that ozone hastens the corruption of meat. This north wind, too, is not only terribly oppressing and irritating to man and animal, but is also absolutely poisonous. Coming as it does from over the vast tropical swamps that lie to the northward, it is charged with malaria. Were it not for the cold, bracing, pure pampero that, rushing up with fury from the south, drives back this unhealthy blast and dispels the mephitic vapours, this portion of South America would be uninhabitable to man for its fatal fevers.

Early this afternoon, having run at a great rate before the strong pampero, we reached the junction of the rivers Parana and Paraguay, and here leaving the former we proceeded to sail up the latter mighty stream, with the forests of the Republic of Paraguay on our right hand, and the Indian territory of El Chaco on our left.

At last, after a river voyage of seventy-four days, we found ourselves at the gate of that fair land of Paraguay, of which we had heard so strange things, and which we had so desired to see; the country of women, a very fairyland of romance, of which so little

is known in Europe ; a region the most favoured by nature under the sun ; a beautiful, tropical garden, well watered by many lakes and rivers, and yet now the poorest and most unfortunate of states.

The history of Paraguay does not go far back, and yet it is one of the most remarkable in the world, and full of instruction to communists and other theorizers on the perfect social state.

Here remote from the sea, in an earthly paradise, dwelt a mild, kindly but brave race, that of the Guarani Indians. To them in the commencement of the sixteenth century came the Jesuit fathers, who, notwithstanding the jealousy of the Spaniards, succeeded in founding here the most important of all their missionary establishments. Paraguay became an ecclesiastical commonwealth. The fathers taught the Indians the arts of peace—and war too, for no little fighting had to be done at times with savage Indians and San Paulist slave-hunters. The people held all their property in common, and were taught a blind obedience to their clerical rulers ; they were kept in a state of perpetual pupillage, as mere children, not being allowed to acquire the art of writing or reading, and being compelled to speak the Guarani language alone. By these means the Jesuits thought to insure the perpetual submission of these docile savages, and to prevent the ingress of any new ideas from abroad.

Such was the education and such the dependent condition of this simple people for a century and a half. Then the Jesuits were expelled from South America, and anarchy and pestilence sadly thinned the Guarani population. Next that new spirit of

revolution that had so shaken all the thrones of Europe crossed the seas, and the watchwords of political freedom were echoed from the Pampas to the Andes and even up to remote Paraguay. Not one of the Spanish-American races was in any way prepared for self-government, nor are they so to this day, but far less than all poor Indian Paraguay. But little could these docile children of the good fathers understand these new theories about liberty—what did they want with liberty? Thus when all the states around them declared their independence from Spain, the Paraguayans did nothing, but wondered in their usual stupid way, and waited for something to turn up. Something did turn up in the shape of one Francia. Seizing the reins of government, this man constituted himself the first of the dictators or tyrants of Paraguay. His policy was similar to that of the Jesuits in many respects. Under his administration all foreigners were excluded from the country; if any wretched stranger did venture across the frontier, he was not permitted to return, and was most probably imprisoned for life. This exclusiveness was indeed if anything stricter than was that of Japan until recently.

To Francia succeeded Lopez I., who followed in the footsteps of his predecessor; and then came the infamous Lopez II., his son, who in his short reign succeeded in converting the once cultivated garden of Paraguay into what it now is, a jungle roamed over by tigers that have become man-eaters since their glut of human flesh in the late terrible war; a land of women and children, for nearly all the men were slain; whose population numbers but one-sixth of what it did but twenty years ago.

Lopez II. commenced by converting the so-called Republic of Paraguay into what may more appropriately be termed one huge slave estate of his own. He enforced the old laws prohibiting any native to leave the country, but encouraged foreign engineers and artificers to come to it, that they might be subservient to his ambitious schemes ; though towards the latter end of his administratorship he was wont to imprison and otherwise ill-treat these on the slightest pretext.

The river Paraguay was closed to foreign bottoms ; when an Italian schooner came up the Parana from Buenos Ayres, it was obliged to come to an anchor at the mouth of the Paraguay. The tyrant would then send an agent on board to inspect the cargo and offer a price for it. If this was accepted the goods were stored in the government magazines, and retailed to the people at a high profit. If Lopez and the skipper could not come to terms, the latter had to return to Buenos Ayres with his cargo, for he was not permitted to sell it to any private party. All the commerce of the country passed through the dictator's hands, who thus amassed an enormous fortune. If Lopez had contented himself with tyrannizing over the docile Guaranis, no one would have meddled with him ; but in an evil hour for himself and Paraguay he visited Europe. At Paris he learnt all the vices of civilization and nothing more. There he took to himself a mistress, an English woman, another man's wife ; clever, ambitious, and unscrupulous, she flattered the vain, ignorant savage, and led him to believe that he was destined to become the Napoleon of South America. He greedily drank the poison, returned to

Paraguay, spent the whole revenue of the little country in preparing her for a gigantic struggle, and then set to work to conquer the southern continent.

Hence that five years' war, which only terminated twelve years back with the death of Lopez at the hands of a Brazilian lancer, one of the most terrible wars of history, between one plucky little Indian state and three such formidable allies as Brazil, the Argentine Republic, and Uruguay. Few know what those five years were ; what suffering, what atrocities, what oceans of blood attended that literally war to the knife, and all to gratify the ambition of one madman, the half-breed Lopez. The Jesuit-taught, docile Guaranis followed him devotedly to the death, blindly, not loving him and yet not fearing, but with unreasoning, dog-like fidelity. Their bravery in this war and their contempt for death were such as possibly no men ever before displayed. Even the women fought ; it is said that whole battalions of them went into action with their long black hair flowing behind them. Half-naked men, armed merely with long knives, came down the river in canoes, and attacked great ironclads, and actually succeeded in capturing one Brazilian man-of-war.

For five years the unequal contest was prolonged, until the Guaranis were nearly exterminated, and to this day there are nine women to one man. Towards the latter years of the war Lopez became little better than a dangerous madman, as was his prototype, Nero, before him. An insane suspicion of all, even his relations and dearest friends, possessed him. He was liable to sudden accessions of violent rage. He put to death all officers that were unsuccessful in

battle, or who were unable to carry out his impracticable orders. It is said that he had a cage of wild beasts in his palace, to whom he threw his cousins or other people that annoyed him. He ordered his own mother and sisters to be publicly whipped for expostulating with him for executing some innocent relative. He put to death his bishop-brother, and the noblest of the land, in his jealous hatred of any that might be considered as equal to himself.

If any man was praised before him as being good or able, it was sufficient to arouse the tyrant's suspicion, and a death warrant was issued. It seems almost impossible to imagine that this reign of terror was in the nineteenth century; nay, but twelve short years back.

After the final defeat and death of Lopez, the allied armies occupied the country for a time, and it is but recently that the last Brazilian regiments have evacuated Concepcion and other towns. Such a tremendous war indemnity was demanded by the conquerors from the vanquished republic as will cripple her energies and render her perpetually bankrupt; for it is quite impossible that she will ever pay it, or her public loan, for the matter of that, which was fraudulently contracted for her in Europe, and of which poor Paraguay received so little.

At the present day matters are drifting along tranquilly enough in the desolate country. The form of government is as nearly as possible that of the neighbouring republics, and the rivers are as open to foreign vessels as the Thames itself.

Such is the history of Paraguay, the only South American Republic that has no sea-board, and the

only country in the world in which the conquerors have universally adopted the language of the conquered, for Guarani is still the spoken tongue, Spanish being only used by the upper classes, who are not very numerous ; even the country priests can only speak the Indian dialect. But Spanish words are used for European luxuries and for numerals above five, for which there are no equivalents in Guarani, this not being a mathematically-minded race.

Paraguay is indeed a beautiful and voluptuous land ; a tropical forest cloven by broad, fair rivers, with gardens fair as those of the Hesperides intervening between the places of denser growth—a realm of lotus-eaters, where the worn mariner might well be tempted, like the followers of Ulysses, to wax weary of the “ fields of barren foam,” and cry,—

“ We will return no more ; our island home  
Is far beyond the wave ; we will no longer roam.”

There are, indeed, certain men who have come here from Europe, and the lazy influence of the soft, beautiful climate has eaten into their souls, and they have stayed in the “ land of streams,” unwilling to return, settling on these gentle hills that slope to the broad Paraguay, amid groves of orange-trees, bananas, and papaws, with white-robed, silent Indian women serving them as slaves.

There is no useful product of the tropics that is not to be found in Paraguay : sugar, coffee, yerba, cassava, tobacco, cotton, and rice, all flourish on the fertile red soil. It is a land where there is an unbelievable profusion and variety of game of all sorts for the sportsman. For the explorer, too, there is on



the Brazilian frontier, in latitude  $24^{\circ}$ , the half-fabulous cascade of La Guayra, where the whole volume of the Parana falls from a great height. The old Jesuits had visited it, and describe it as the most stupendous cataract in the world, even greater than Niagara. No white man has ever seen it in modern times. The Indians say that no man can dwell within thirty miles of the falls, for even at that distance the roar is so great as to produce complete deafness in time. Expeditions of whites have attempted to reach La Guayra, but have all failed, so dense is the undergrowth of the forests through which they had to cut their way, so pestilential the swamps that have to be traversed. Strange, indeed, are the tales that the Indians tell of some of these inner solitudes : of the gold, the jewels. One is reminded, on hearing them, of the fairy tales of the Eldorado that first urged the old Spanish adventurers to their bold explorations.

The women of Paraguay, for so few are the men that of the fair sex alone is it worth while to say much, are not uncomely ; they have well-moulded limbs, voluptuous lustrous eyes, and are of every colour, from mahogany to the white and pink complexion of the fairest Anglo-Saxon. The dress of a Paraguayan woman consists merely of a snow-white tunic, coming down to the knees, and a white shawl ; a much prettier costume than the dingy black robe of the Argentine. These women are bare-footed, only the upper classes wearing boots. "The shoed people" is the Guarani expression for the aristocracy.

This mild race lives principally on oranges, pumpkins, cassava, and other fruits and vegetables, being

almost vegetarian, unlike the almost exclusively beef-eating and more ferocious Argentine of the Pampas. There can be no doubt that the Guarani is one of the higher branches of the Indian family. The Paraguayans are incontestably a handsomer race than any of the half-breeds of the neighbouring republics. I have seen in this land as perfectly beautiful women as in any part of the world, but, it must be confessed, they are the exception. The Guarani women are of a decidedly voluptuous disposition. They swing languidly in their graceful hammocks in the orange-grove, sipping their maté, smoking their home-made cigars, while they sing their melancholy barbaric airs in a low voice, words whose whole tenor is of love. No one here toils more than is sufficient to produce the necessaries of existence. Dance and song and love, such is the life of these lotus-eaters of South America, who look with mild astonishment at the money-making energy of Europeans, with their telegraphs and their steam-engines, and the like—look at them as clever indeed, but quite mad. “For why so much toil?” they ask,—

“All things have rest, why should we toil alone?

Give us long rest or death, dark death or dreamful ease.”

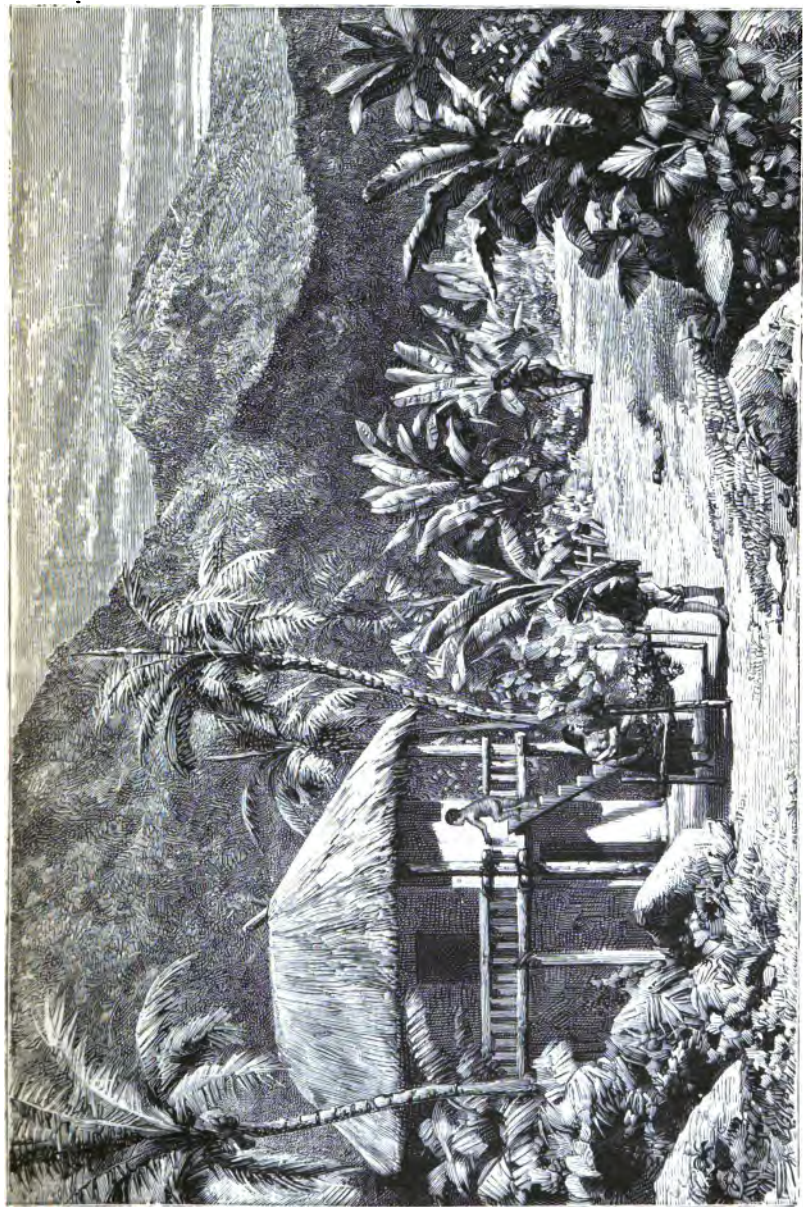
Many are the virtues of these poor, brave Paraguayans; they are hospitable, kindly, honest, and though marriage is looked upon as an unnecessary prelude to two young people starting housekeeping together, they are remarkably constant in their attachments. The Paraguayan girls are, like Byron's savage heroines, faithful unto death, soft as doves, but ready to give up their lives for their mates. Fiery, passionate little creatures these, and woe to him who

gives one cause for jealousy, for in love and hate they have the tiger in them—the fierce Indian blood that produced a Lopez throbs in the veins of these tropical Haidées.

In this land none see any shame in unlawful love. Every country priest keeps his mistress, generally more than one, and this openly without any attempt at concealment, every parsonage containing its harem and its nursery. In a recent work on South America the Paraguayans are reported to excuse the errors of their clergy by saying that the Pope has, in compassion for the now unpopulated condition of poor Paraguay, been pleased to grant to the priests there, dispensation from their vows of chastity. This excuse is a very good one, but from all accounts this people were not famed for their morality even in the days before the war.

Not a few European travellers have visited Asuncion since the war, but none, I believe, have explored the interior of the country. Paraguay is indeed now, for the most part, an unknown country, even to its inhabitants; and yet there are few so charming regions for the traveller, be he sportsman or naturalist, or merely an admirer of what is grand and beautiful in nature. What more delightful than an expedition of a few friends in a properly-furnished and light canoe upon these glorious rivers and lakes, many of which have been hitherto undisturbed by the frailest bark-boat of the Indian? At times the explorer will, to his amazement, suddenly come upon a stately stone ruin in the dense forest, overgrown and half-hidden with the rank creepers. It is the remains of a Christian church, marking the site of

some old Jesuit mission, long since deserted to the tigers, all signs of the ancient clearings and maté plantations wiped away, for the rapid growth of tropical vegetation soon fills up the scars of man's handiwork.



View in Paraguay.



## CHAPTER VII.

AS we entered the mouth of the river Paraguay, we saw before us an island that is called Cerito, on which, though we could perceive no houses, there were several white-clad damsels standing, who waved their hands to us and laughed musically as we sailed by, as if to welcome us to the land of women.

We noticed that the Paraguay was considerably narrower than the Parana, and that the vegetation had suddenly changed in character, being more tropical. Possibly this is due to the waters of the Paraguay being of a higher temperature than those of the Parana, for it flows from due north, straight from the burning regions of Central Brazil, whereas the latter river pursues a westerly course.

The navigation of the Paraguay is much easier than that of the Parana, notwithstanding that it winds like a corkscrew, but it is generally deep and unobstructed by sandbanks, while its current is much less rapid than that of the other stream. At night-fall, having sailed a great distance before the strong pampero, we came to an anchor along the Paraguayan shore, with a line from our bows to a palm-tree in the forest.

During the next day, July 27th, the south wind blew hard, so we accomplished another good day's work. We sailed between magnificent tropical forests that even roused our enthusiasm, accustomed as we were to such scenes; we passed occasional brakes of the most gigantic canes I have ever seen, stout as our own main-mast. Both banks were alive with parrots and monkeys, and the alligators lay basking in rows by the water edge, looking like so many stranded logs. We saw no sign of human life till the evening, when we passed a canoe with a melancholy man in a red poncho standing up in it, in an objectless sort of way. I was below at the time, so Jerdein called me up to look at the wonder. We gazed at him with great interest, as he only deserved, for that, we said, must be the "last man" of Paraguay, the one left in the woman's land; and no doubt he stands thus perpetually at the gate of his country, the solitary example of its murdered manhood.

We shot at some of the alligators with our revolvers, and often hit them, but they did not heed these pellets—rather liked them, and only blinked as they recoiled from their scaly armour.

This night we anchored again under the Paraguayan shore. One of those terrible thunder-storms peculiar to these countries broke upon us, and lasted for several hours. We, too, became rather electric and stormy after tea, for we discussed the Irish question so warmly that we kept the poor pilot awake for more than half the night with our declamations, and effectually frightened all the monkeys away from that part of the forest.



The next morning the weather was damp and close, with a yellow fog hanging over the jungle, very suggestive of fever.

As there was no wind, we had to remain where we were, so I determined to set foot on the Paraguayan shore and see what manner of country it might be. Taking my Martini-Henri rifle with me, I landed, and found that beyond a morass and jungle of cane and bamboo that lined the river there extended a splendid wood of huge trees, from whose depths I could distinguish the cries of wild beasts, and over whose dark foliage flew multitudes of large green-and-gold-plumaged parrots. After penetrating this jungle, I found myself surrounded by that wonderful production of tropical nature—the virgin forest, with its tangled mass of intricate creepers and its monstrous growth of secular trees. The most thoughtless man is strangely awed and impressed by this gigantic and mysterious nature that appeals at once to his every sense. Like a cataract of sound ring out around him the manifold new and terrible noises of the solitude. The strident cries of rainbow-birds, the angry, hoarse shriek of others, the fearful wails of various beasts, the shrill, ear-piercing song of cicala, and at times a fearful crash in the unseen depths of the woods as of thunder, that hushes all that noisy life for a moment—it is the fall of some ancient giant of the woods, a huge tree dead long ages ago, but only now breaking its way through the dense growth around it to the ground. Most impressive is this teeming life, vegetable and animal, but not human, for nature here is too great and rank for man. Here life springs up fierce and monstrous, drawn up from

the warm alluvial swamp by the all-compelling sun of the tropics. One can almost imagine that his senses perceive—that he hears the tremendous flow of sap, the intense generation, a growth so great and rapid that it goes beyond death itself. The great tree outstrips itself, and while one half is green and full of life, the other is rotten and dead; strange creepers with metallic-lusted leaves wreath round skeleton branches with their graceful festoons. A life, reckless, profligate, despising death, familiar with and embracing it on its way. Out of leprous-looking tangles of rotten trunks and leaves spring in horrible contrast the ghoul-like plants feeding on decay, rich, rank, gaudy of colour. The tree endeavours to force its way for life to the upper light and air above the dark smothering undergrowth—so for sixty feet it puts out no leaves, but employs all its strength to rise upwards to the open heavens, where at last it sends forth branches to breathe the fresh winds, and feel the bright sun. Then the parasitic creeper from below ascends the tree, fighting also for the light and air, and winds round the trunk and branch till it chokes its helpmate and they both die. Among this vigorous life, death meets one at every step. Plant and animal prey on each other and live by death. The vulture awaits it on the tree-tops, the wild beasts below crouching in the jungle, all are on their guard, each preying on another, each fearing a greater. The habitant of temperate lands where life is less strong and profligate, but more careful and provident, is awed by this perpetual presence of death. It is everywhere—pestilence is in the air—the hectic berries are poisons—the rare savage of these wilds knows

not what security is, he creeps with stealthy, fearsome steps through the confused growth, uncertain what next danger he will suddenly come upon, what hideous reptile, what new death lurking among the brilliant flowers.

In these forests of Paraguay is to be found a wonderful variety of strange plants of every kind, and the *feræ*, unhunted by man, abound in incredible numbers. Besides the jaguars, pumas, and deer, are tapirs, bears, hogs, while among serpents the deadly rattlesnakes are unpleasantly common. Huge vampire-bats, too, flit about these wilds, and often prove worse than disagreeable to the traveller that camps out in the open.

Later in the day a light wind sprang up which enabled us to sail as far as Humaita, off which little town we anchored, alongside a schooner whose mainmast had been struck by lightning in the last night's storm, and had broken off short a few feet above the deck. A drizzling rain was falling as we neared Humaita, and miserable the place looked.

We saw a congregation of a few low huts, not more than sixteen. But high above all soared a monument of misery—the ruins of a great church that must have been a grand building in its day, but is now a weird-looking wreck, having evidently been pounded to pieces by heavy cannon. It is wonderful that so much of it does remain, and that it was not entirely levelled, for this now dismantled fortress of Humaita was the chief stronghold of Lopez. For three years was fierce battle waged here, and the Brazilian gunboats in vain poured their heavy balls upon the devoted earthworks. For three days even after the

evacuation of the place, when not one inhabitant was left in it, did the iron hail fall on the church and town, so fearful were the conquerors of landing among those wonderful men and women who fought so fiercely. The Brazilians made themselves pretty sure that not a Paraguayan was left among the ruins before they dared occupy the troublesome fortress.

Notwithstanding so prolonged a bombardment, the grand church still towers bravely over the huts of Humaita, for those old Jesuits built for all time, unlike our modern architects, and the stout walls could not fall utterly; the tower, though riddled and torn, still stands a ghastly monument of the five years' war. It was here at Humaita that Lopez put his celebrated chain across the Paraguay to stop the Brazilian gun-boats. Here, too, he sank blocks of toska in the river for the same object, which still impede the navigation. When the water is low a plentiful harvest of cannon-balls, guns, and other weapons is to be gathered in the bed of the Paraguay, in front of the town. The population of Humaita consists, as far as I could see, of a crowd of women and girls, who live in ranchos scattered about the remains of the old pueblo. As soon as a vessel brings up off here, these flock down twenty or thirty of them together, each with something to sell, eggs, cassava, sweet potatoes, and other produce. This afternoon it rained so hard that only two or three ventured forth. Ladies who possess but one garment in the world, and that a light one, and dwell in highly-ventilated bamboo-and-mud huts, naturally do not care to expose themselves under a tropical rain. We noticed that though the women for the most part

were of pure Guarani, or of Indo-Spanish blood, many of the children had a good deal of the nigger in them, a consequence of the long Brazilian occupation. Many of the women that had Spanish blood in their veins were of remarkably fair complexions, and had golden hair. This, some say, is due to the fact that the few Spaniards that originally conquered Paraguay were Biscayans, a florid race, unlike the swarthy Andalusians that overrun the countries that are now included in the Argentine Republic.

We did not go on shore the afternoon of our arrival in consequence of the rain. We discovered that we were wrong in imagining that there were nothing but women and children at Humaita, for suddenly a man presented himself on the bank and stood there gazing at us. There was one male then, anyhow. He put himself in a conspicuous place so that we could not fail to see him, and then evidently set to work to persuade us that there was quite a considerable male population in the town. For this poor, vain patriot, after having had a good look at us, departed ; returned a few minutes after, and commenced staring again with an affectation of surprise, as if he had never seen us before. Then he again went away, returned once more, and repeated the process. This pantomime went on for about an hour, but we saw through the fraud, and would no more take him to be more than one man than are we deceived by the apparently huge army that crosses the stage of a theatre, the same warriors marching by over and over again.

At last he hailed Don Juan, and, lo ! he turned

out not to be a Paraguayan at all, but an Italian-store-keeper, a friend of our pilot. He came on board and told us all the latest news. Among other things he said that a revolution had broken out in the province of Corrientes, and that there had been a "little killing" at Esquina. This in no way surprised us, though but three days back when we were in Corrientes all was quiet, but revolutions break out very suddenly in these countries, especially when the north wind blows.

The captain of the port came off to us—a very pleasant fellow, who was delighted to see the first yacht that had ever sailed to Paraguay. He gave us strict injunctions not to anchor on the Chaco side of the river at night, between Hamaita and Asuncion, as the Indians that come down the riachos to fish are of a very dangerous class, and wage perpetual war against the whites.

During the 29th of July we sailed by the solemn forests and cane-brakes that characterize this river, seeing as usual no sign of human beings on the banks, save one encampment of wild Indians on the Chaco shore at the sandy estuary of a little stream. These yelled discordantly at us as we passed. We observed that some of these Indians were employed in skinning what appeared to be a large serpent.

"It is an anaconda—a water-snake," said Don Juan ; "there are many hereabouts."

He told us these monsters of the river often attained an immense size. He had seen the skin of one on a goletta that was twenty-four feet long and eight broad. I remember reading a translation of some old Jesuit's journal in Purchase's Pilgrims, in which

the gigantic size of the anacondas of the Paraguay is alluded to.

At midday we came to a bend where a considerable river joined the Paraguay. This was the Vermejo, a stream that, rising in the highlands of Bolivia, flows by the city of Tarija, and thence winds for upwards of a thousand miles across the Indian Chaco to this point. This great river has never been fully explored, for the dense forests on its banks are inhabited by ferocious Indians who nurse an undying hatred against the Spaniard, and, themselves unseen and safe in the trees, let fly their poisonous arrows against any rash whites that venture into their fastnesses. The Vermejo is not more than fifty yards in breadth at its junction with the Paraguay, but higher up they say it is shallow and very wide.

Above the estuary of the Vermejo the river Paraguay flows with so little velocity that we found it possible in most places to beat up against wind and tide; the shallow river-schooners, however, cannot do this.

The next day being calm, we were forced to remain at anchor under the Paraguayan shore. Across the river we beheld a very typical scene of the Chaco wilderness. We saw four Indians come stealthily down to the bank, armed with long lances. Then, lying down among the reeds, they gazed silently into the water till they saw some big fish pass by, when, with wonderful skill, they speared them one after the other, and threw them on the bank. Next they lit a fire, roasted the fish they had caught, and devoured them. This done, they picked up their weapons and crept back into the woods as noiselessly and stealthily

as they had come. The whole time—some three hours—that they were on the river-bank not one of these men spoke a word ; they gave the necessary directions to each other by slight inclinations of the head only. As soon as they had gone, the kites and vultures that had been waiting patiently around came down and finished the remains of the fish.

In the canoe I ascended a beautiful stream in the Chaco this day, but the vegetation was too dense to allow a landing in any spot ; however, I succeeded in killing some duck and turkeys.

The business of the next day, the 31st of July, commenced with what the pilot called a "diversion." Arthur and Jim, while preparing the morning coffee for their masters, fell out over some discussion on the Irish Question or Woman's Rights maybe, as the skipper and mate were wont to do. But from windy words the two lads came to blows, and created a din that awoke us all, whereupon Jerdein, who is not fond of having his slumbers disturbed, informed them that if they wanted to fight, they must do so on deck. As they seemed very anxious to have it out, they were marched up, and allowed to exhibit their pugilistic skill through a few rounds ; then, their officers deciding that each had received a sufficient punishment, they were sent down again to their duties. The monotonous life, good food, and light work of the river cruise had made the boys wax over-plethoric and hence irritable. They were always wrangling, and this contest was necessary to clear the atmosphere. Arthur was the smallest but the pluckiest of the two. Jim the half-breed was the heaviest. Arthur got Jim's head in chancery, and then set-to to pum-



mel it lustily, being quite unaware of the toughness of the nigger's skull. Jim on this commenced to butt his adversary's stomach with the top of his head, as is the fashion of his race, much to Arthur's surprise and discomfiture. Jim was very anxious to discontinue the fight, though he was really getting the best of it, and amused us much by constantly calling out in his Creole-English, as he fought, "Artur! now you beat me or I beat you quick, for I in much hurry; I must go make captin's coffee."

The morning being calm, the pilot, myself, and Arthur with his black eye, paddled some miles up a riacho, but shot nothing but a carpincho and a cayman, who both escaped.

In the afternoon the wind freshened, blowing right in our teeth, but we made good progress tacking against it. The water was deep right up to the banks, so we never went about until our rigging brushed against the palms and other tropic trees. The river was here literally covered with lilies, through which our vessel clove its way, tearing up and casting them away from either side of her stem like the un-æsthetic yawl that she is. Towards evening we came to a rich and beautiful country, pretty farmhouses were seen occasionally peeping through the oranges, palms, and guava bushes that lined the river bank. We were evidently approaching some large settlement, and soon on turning a palm-covered promontory we saw it before us, the picturesque Paraguayan town of Villa Pillar, one of the most considerable places in the Republic.

These townships of Paraguay present a much more pleasing appearance than the dismal Argentine

pueblos of the Pampas with their ugly, flat-roofed houses. The houses of Villa Pillar, for instance, have wooden verandahs in front of them, and sloping roofs of palms, looking something like Swiss cottages. As seen from the river this pretty settlement presents rather the appearance of a garden than a town, for the habitations are scattered, and nestle in groves of papaws, bananas, palms, and orange-trees.

On the morrow of our arrival I went on shore to do some necessary marketing, taking Jim with me, who carried a large sack on his shoulders, into which the provisions were thrown as soon as purchased. We traversed several silent, sandy streets that were strewn with the oranges that fell from the frequent trees; on looking round, my first impressions of a Paraguayan town were certainly of an agreeable nature.

Numerous women passed us, each clad in the snowy white robe of the country, bare-footed, and bearing something on her head, a jar of water, a pumpkin, a bundle of cigars. I have never seen a Paraguayan woman without some burden, be it only a box of matches thus placed; I do not think she considers herself dressed or decent without one. Every one of these fair damsels was smoking a long native cigar, also quite indispensable to the women of this race, the smallest female children of three years old that toddle at their mother's heels are inveterate devotees of "ye holy yerbe," as old Purchase calls it. Few Paraguayans are really remarkable for the beauty of their features; but their figures, the modelling of their small hands and feet, are such as no other land can I believe show. They stalk through

the streets with a soft, supple, panther-like tread, that is most beautiful, for they do not indulge in high-heeled boots and stays, but step out as Eve herself might have done, quite unimpeded by their simple dress, which is merely a short tunic tied round at the waist, and adorned with the pretty native lace. These tunics have short-sleeves and very low necks, and reveal the statuesque shoulders and breasts rather more than would be considered delicate in Europe. Nearly all the Paraguayan women have large dark and fine eyes, and I think they know this.

What I particularly remarked was the jovial, gay nature of this amiable and innocent race, so unlike the sombre dignity of the Argentine character. These Paraguayan women seem to be always happy and laughing, and their kindness and goodnature towards each other is very discernible. The few men we met possessed the same jovial, kindly nature, but they are more indolent and selfish than the ever sprightly women, who, being now so much in the majority, do all the work in the country, and pamper and support the nobler sex. Thus the men become considerably spoilt, and degenerate into lazy drones dependent on the generous fair, which cannot but prove sadly detrimental to the nobility of this once fine race.

We came to an open place backed by groves of oranges, and sloping to the broad river ; in the middle of this was a fine market-place, a large covered building, such as I did not expect to find in Villa Pillar.

Here the white-robed houris vended meat, Mandioka, sugar-canes, sweet potatoes, cigars, and the various coloured liqueurs for which this land of Paraguay is famous, and which the old Jesuits, I

suppose, taught their children to distil from the oranges and canes; some of these liqueurs are flavoured with rose leaves and other flowers.

These market-women were all laughing and most goodnatureedly importunate; how different again from the silent china market-girls of Cordoba that I have described further back! One would catch me by the coat, and try to stammer out in Spanish, persuasions to buy her goods, then the whole market would resound with shrill laughter at her failure in the foreign language: "Come and try my fine cigars, patron," or "See this fine mandioka," "How nice is this fat meat!" about exhausted their knowledge of the Castilian, whereupon they would commence to jabber away in the soft Guarani. The way I was pestered by these fair damsels was very trying to a modest man like myself.

After I had completed my purchases and filled Jim's sack, my fair butcheress, a plump little woman whom I had selected from all the other butcheresses on account of her superior beauty, insisted on giving me the customary *japa* or parting gift of a glass of liqueur. On this all the other women in the market tried to make me take *japas* with them; I tasted a few green, blue, pink, and yellow compounds to their great delight, and departed to the sound of clapping hands and feminine laughter.

The market-place of Villa Pillar is certainly a most amusing sight for a stranger. I found that nearly all Paraguayan markets were conducted on the same merry principles. There is always an immense amount of joviality and good feeling between vendor and purchaser.

I returned on board and spun a tremendous yarn to Jerdein and Arnaud about what I had seen on shore, and drew such a spirited picture for them of a tropical paradise, with white-robed houris looking so pretty as they swung with their bare feet hanging over the hammocks among the orange-trees and palms, wherein they took their midday siestas, like snowy doves contrasting with the dark green of the foliage, and so on in a similar strain, that they were tempted to go on shore themselves and see these wonders. They returned and told me I had grossly exaggerated the beauties of both the women and the land, whereupon followed one of our usual fierce and prolonged discussions.

## CHAPTER VIII.

ON August 2nd we made good progress before a cold and moisture-charged southerly wind. Throughout the day we saw no signs of human life. In the evening we passed Villa Franca, once a flourishing town. We could only see one rancho on the beach. The pilot said he landed there two years back and found the population of this city consisted of two women. Thus have the banishment of the Jesuits and the wars of Lopez depopulated and ruined these once flourishing regions.

From the mouth of the Paraguay to Asunçion, nearly 300 miles, there are but two settlements now that are worthy even of the name of villages, Villa Pillar and Villeta. We passed by many deserted ranchos on the forest-clad banks. Our pilot once found a fine tiger-skin hanging up in one of these. It was difficult to say what had become of the inhabitants. The common explanation about here is that they were eaten by jaguars, for these beasts are very numerous in Paraguay, and have become man-eaters since the war ; they are much bolder here than in most parts of America, even walking coolly into the streets of a town like Villeta occasionally, and taking off some plump child or woman.

This night we did not cast anchor, but made fast with a hawser to a palm on the Chaco shore, for there were many sunken trees about here which our anchor might have got foul of and so have been lost.

We were close to the sandy estuary of a little riacho, which the pilot said was much frequented by Indians. Further in, he told us, this stream opened out into a great deep-water lake, which he once explored in a Spanish schooner, that had sailed to the Chaco to take in a cargo of hard wood. He was no less than six days sailing round this inland sea, but found no timber, jungle alone on the banks. From the centre of it no land was visible on either side even from the top-mast of the vessel, so extensive was this sheet of water. It is not marked on any of the maps, but indeed the Chaco even close to the river banks is but little known. The pilots call this lake the Laguna Ojo.

No marauding Indians molested us this night, but we were kept awake some time by the roaring of many jaguars in the bush.

During our next day's voyage we were much astonished at seeing another very strange phenomenon in the Chaco, which also was unmarked in our maps. This was no less than an important fortified town. There on the edge of the Paraguay was a congregation of log-houses and stores, with the backwoods just behind them—no clearing having yet been made even of the immediate forest. There was a battery, too, facing the river, with half a dozen small brass guns on it, and the white tents indicating the encampment of a full battalion of troops. Off this settlement rode at anchor two gun-boats, and to

our amazement we perceived that both fort and men-of-war flew the Argentine and not the Paraguayan flag.

All this was an exceeding puzzle to us, and also to our pilot, who had never seen this military establishment before.

"Why," he said, "when I was here last that was a settlement of Indians; the *tolderia* of one of the greatest *Caciques* of the Chaco was on that spot."

It was not until we reached Asunción that this mystery was solved. We were told that since the war the Argentine Republic as well as Paraguay laid a claim to this portion of the Chaco, and the former had thought proper about twenty months back to establish this fortified post as a menace, I suppose, to the Indian Republic. It is called *Formosa*, and will, I suppose, form the nucleus of a prosperous colony in time. At present it is merely a military post, and rations are served out to the civilians daily as to the troops. Thus vessels cannot easily victual here, as we found on our return voyage.

After passing this place we overtook a clumsy canoe, in which a man and two women were painfully toiling up the stream. We took them in tow, and invited them to share our dinner, which was then on the table. The man consented, and came on board, but the women were shy, and would not board us, but remained in the canoe. They could only speak *Guarani*, so we could not get on very well with them. Our visitor was evidently a military man, for his costume consisted of a blue, brass-buttoned military tunic, and a black felt *sombrero*, but nothing else; he wore no shirt, nor shoes, nor trousers, and it must



be confessed presented rather a ridiculous appearance. We called him major, whereupon he smiled and showed signs of great satisfaction. We dropped the canoe at Oliva, a cluster of ranchos, but once an important place.

On the 4th of August we sailed a great distance before a fresh south wind. We passed Villa Mercedes, an important town with only one rancho that is not in ruins, and that one is uninhabited. Here also we saw the wreck of the old military telegraph of Lopez that connected Asunción with Corrientes.

As it was possible to tack up the Paraguay, we were only detained by calms during this part of the voyage, not by head-winds. We were detained by dead calm, or an insufficiency of wind, during the 5th, 6th, and 7th of August. Luckily, we were at anchor in an interesting portion of the river, and were enabled to amuse ourselves with sport and exploration, both on the Chaco and Paraguayan shores.

Arnaud, Don Juan, and myself in the canoe ascended a broad stream that penetrated the Chaco. On the way we shot a lobo (river seal), and picked up a derelict Indian canoe. After paddling several miles up this river we found that it opened out into a broad lake surrounded by fine forest, and studded with many islands of lilies and other aquatic plants, floating gardens, whose sole inhabitants were gorgeous butterflies.

We circumnavigated the lake, but could nowhere discover a landing-place, for the country seemed to be flooded for leagues inland. We paddled up between the great trees, and the intricate lianes far

up into the recesses of the forest. The aspect of this wilderness was grand in the extreme. In places the still water reflected beautifully the glorious vegetation, the evergreens with their lilac and red flowers and the towering palms. In places the dense growth above hid the sky, and we progressed slowly, winding among the trunks of huge trees through the inky water, along caverns of dark branches, above us the noise of the unseen parrots and monkeys, and below the ugly roar of the crocodiles. Then we burst out once more into an open glade of the forest, glowing under the sunshine, where the spread of water would be entirely covered with the *Victoria Regia*, the queen of lilies, forming a fairer carpet than can be imagined by any one that has not seen the wonders of these lands.

We came to a certain large tree, with dark-green leaves, which Don Juan told us was always a favourite of the pavos. He told us that he had never seen one of these trees on which half a dozen or so of these birds were not perched. The pavo, both in shape and in the cackling sound it makes, is very similar to a large domestic fowl, but its plumage is something like that of a partridge. It is excellent eating. Don Juan told us that the pavo was rather a wild bird, but if you succeeded in shooting one on a tree, none of the others would fly away, but remain to be quietly killed in detail. Likewise if one took fright and flew away, all the others would immediately follow, these birds possessing much family affection, and never separating in life or death. There were six pavos on this particular tree, so here was a good opportunity of discovering whether this bird is quite so idiotic as

our *pratiquo* made out. We paddled up cautiously, and succeeded in bringing down the necessary first one, and true enough not one of the others moved, but they simply flapped their wings and looked around them in an uneasy and foolish manner, as if they thought something was not quite right, until we had secured the whole six, not a very much more sportsmanlike feat than firing into a poultry-yard might be ; but great was the rejoicing on board when we produced this welcome addition to the larder, for salt meat had been our diet for some days.

I have often read of vessels being ice-bound, but never lily-bound ; and yet this was our plight while we lay at anchor during these three days of calm. Camelotas, big and small, were floating down in thousands at this time. These got across our chains, and gradually accumulated, till we became the centre of one great island of beautiful lilies, in leaf, in flower, and fruit. Finding that these were causing us to drag our anchor, we left off hanging over the bows, "living up to the precious things ;" and waxing unæsthetic, commenced to ruthlessly cut them away with cutlasses and hatchets, a long and tedious process ; but we had no desire to be carried away to sea by our floating island, which would soon have taken charge and dragged us off, so big was it becoming.

We visited the Paraguayan shore of the river, which was hereabouts some forty feet high, far out of reach of the highest crescente, so on it we found once more the spinous underwood, the dull-hued thorns and cacti of a waterless land, like that we see in the province of Santiago del Estero, a great contrast to

the rank and glorious vegetation of the opposite Chaco, with its often flooded alluvial soil.

The 8th of August was ushered in by a little excitement in the shape of the ship on fire. A paraffin stove came to grief forward, and caused the mischief. There was a tremendous blaze, but we soon got it under, and little damage was done. This day we killed several patos reales, royal ducks, and I succeeded not only in killing but securing a crocodile. I sent a Martini-Henry bullet into one of his eyes as he lay on the bank. Even this did not immediately render the beast insensible, for he commenced to crawl into the river, but shoving the canoe up towards him, I managed to take a turn round him with the painter, and we hauled him on board. He then flapped about his huge tail in a way that threatened to break some of our legs and smash the canoe, but a few blows on the skull with a hatchet soon quieted him.

It occupied me a good afternoon to skin the monster, no over-pleasant work on a sandbank in the blazing sun, for nothing can be more nauseous than the rank smell of alligator flesh. This day our thermometer registered 87° in the shade, and this in midwinter. The mosquitoes were becoming insufferable, and were it not for the mosquito-nets we had brought with us, and under which we used to sleep on deck at night, travelling would have been quite impossible.

To any who may project a voyage on a South American or other tropical river, a few remarks on the best mode of constructing a mosquito-net for camp purposes may not be amiss. The net for each

person is a sort of little flat-roofed tent, six feet or a few inches more in length, three feet in breadth, and about three feet in height ; the roof is of canvas, so as to keep out the dew, the floor is also of canvas, with a slit four feet long in the middle of it, through which a man crawls into the net with his blanket when about to turn in. The sides are of gauze. Few mosquitoes are sharp enough to follow one into this. Two little spars are sewed into the narrow sides of the roof, which serve to stretch it out ; these are attached by cords to neighbouring trees, or to the rigging of the boat, and thus the little house is securely suspended.

On the 10th of August, the south wind blew strong and enabled us to reach Asunción, and complete our upward voyage. After sailing some hours we saw far off on the Paraguayan shore blue undulating mountains once more, pleasant after the level swamp and forests we had been among for the last three months.

We passed by the little town of Villeta. Here was the schooner *Aconcagua* lying along the bank, taking on board a cargo of oranges. Two gangways connected the vessel with the shore, along which coming and going were two streams of jabbering, laughing, white-robed girls, who brought down the golden fruit in large baskets on their heads, from the orange groves on the neighbouring hills, and poured them into the schooner's hold.

As we sailed on, the Paraguayan shore became more hilly, swelling up into great forest-clad domes, one behind the other to the purple mountains on the horizon far inland. From the very bank of the river rose one very remarkable sugarloaf-shaped peak,

covered with fine timber ; this was the Cerro Lambaré, famous for the gallant defence of the Indian Cacique Lambaré against the Spaniards. The river hereabouts is still of great width, and to one looking from the deck of a vessel the horizon up and down the stream is generally of water, as if it were an estuary. In the afternoon we beheld before us what seemed to be a considerable city, with two Brazilian ironclads and many schooners at anchor off it. We were at last at our journey's end ; after having ascended the great rivers for ninety-one days, we had reached the capital of Paraguay, which is distant by water upwards of 1300 miles from the Atlantic Ocean.

Wretched as is this city of Asunción on nearer inspection, it presents an imposing appearance from the river ; for on a little promontory that juts out slightly from the ruined quays, there towers a grand palace, a haughty structure that dominates all the mean streets ; lower down, too, is a great building that is, or was, evidently the naval arsenal of an ambitious state.

But all else is squalid and in ruins, and on looking once more it is perceived that the palace is a mere wreck with broken windows, gutted as by a fire, a mere empty shell within, and without torn and pierced by many shot, and that the ambitious-looking arsenal is deserted and falling also into ruins. For that glorious and massive palace, reminding one somewhat of the Tuileries and somewhat of some old marble palace of Venice, and now in the same pitiful condition as those imperial Tuileries actually are, is the palace of one who also assumed imperial honours—the would-be Emperor of South America,

Lopez. This and that other ambitious ruin, the Arsenal, where the shot and shell and cannon were turned out, stand as relics of one of the most fearful tyrannies since Nero, one of the most annihilating wars since Carthage fell. It was from this palace that the tyrant swayed the mild Paraguayans with a rod of iron; and now it stands a monument of his despotism over the unfortunate city that he made desolate, and which, though twice as great in extent as Rosario, numbers but about 16,000 inhabitants, for half the houses are in ruins, and many others deserted and tenantless.

Such is the condition of the ancient capital of the great Viceroyalty of La Plata. It is a melancholy place, full of the wrecks of the ambitious schemes of Lopez, who certainly would have made a fine city of it in time. On the north side is a shallow bay that he intended to deepen and convert into a port, a most useful design, but now this bay is entirely covered with the beautiful Victoria Regia lilies, with leaves so large that a child can walk upon them and be supported. Out in the river opposite this bay the top-masts and yards of a sunken ship are visible—another relic of the war, for the stains of battle are not quickly washed out in this land.

We had no sooner cast our anchor than we were visited by an English gentleman, Mr. Horrocks, an old resident in Asunción, who had been expecting us for some weeks, and who looked very well after us while we were in the capital, doing all that was in his power to render our stay agreeable, and giving us much useful information. He was in the habit of keeping regular meteorological observations, and told

us that he had never known a winter in which north winds and high temperature prevailed so much, the barometer had risen to unusual heights, having attained 30·60 three days back.

On landing and exploring Asunción, we were much struck by the desolation that reigned everywhere. Few men were visible in the streets, and these for the most part were foreigners—the crews of the Brazilian gun-boats—Italian storekeepers and others; but of barefooted, graceful-walking women there were many. The streets are unpaved, and so one sinks deep into the soft red sands in which holes full of water and running springs are frequent. In some places banks of stones are built right across the road, so as to act as dams, and prevent the sand washing away with the rain, and leaving deep ravines behind; indeed most of the more hilly streets present the appearance of the profoundly-fissured beds of mountain torrents.

In addition to the palace on the beach and the arsenal, there are several other public monuments, constructed by the late tyrant, rising in strange contrast to their mean surroundings. All of these are more or less in ruins. Everything that Lopez planned was on the most ambitious scale, but was never completed, for the war burst out in the midst of these great works. There is a noble theatre, and a Pantheon destined to be the last resting-place of a long line of emperors. But no actors ever find their way to this impoverished capital, and the house of Lopez fell even before its founder was enabled to wear that imperial crown which he had commissioned a Parisian jeweller to construct for him.



There is a good club at Asunción, of which we were made honorary members ; this house was the original mansion of Lopez before he built the ambitious edifice on the river.

There is an hotel too which we frequented occasionally, the Hotel de Roma, a most pretentious building, though somewhat dilapidated, a palace with its doors opening on an unpaved street of sand and shards. Seeing its magnificence, I knew that this, too, must be some other monument of Lopez ; on inquiry, I found that this was the case. This palace had been built by him to serve as the residence of his mother. Papaws, bananas, and palm-trees grow in quantities about the town, and somewhat relieve the monotony of its red, silent streets. The native men of Asunción seem an indolent lot, and pass their whole life in smoking. They wear white linen trousers, frequently scarlet ponchos, and are bare-footed like the women. These latter, as they stalk by with their white robes and mantles, harmonize well with the ruined city around them. As they pass some unfinished, yet ruined temple of Lopez, with its Grecian architecture, the resemblance of these women in costume and walk and figure to the women of ancient Greece irresistibly strikes the traveller. Their white robes are worn in the same fashion, theirs is the same grace of movement ; but they are always smoking cigars, and Grecian dames, I believe, did not resemble them in this.

A well-known writer has pointed out how much an interior at Asunción resembles one at Pompei in nearly every respect ; there is the same central courtyard, with its fountains, galleries, and painted walls ;

and the girl who walks silently into the patio to present you with the maté and bombilla is the impersonation of the Pompeian slave-girl ; while she waits for the empty bombilla, she stands before you motionless, with her bare white feet gleaming on the tessellated floor ; her white robe is fastened up on one shoulder, revealing the opposite breast ; her faultlessly-moulded arms are bare ; they are dropped meekly in front of her, with the hands clasped. You could take her for some fair statue just stepped down from its niche. You return the bombilla, and with supple, silent tread she goes out without a word.

Asunçion is as much a city of the dead, and of memories only, as are the ruined cities of Greece and Rome ; for all her palaces, though not two decades old, are deserted, grass-grown, and wrecked ; all the civilization and commercial wealth that the Jesuits and the tyrants after them did, notwithstanding their faulty policy, create, are things of the past ; and her brave manhood is no more—slaughtered in an unworthy cause, while women and a new and effeminate bastard youth alone represent the gallant race.

I should say that Asunçion was the very dullest capital in the world, even duller than Cetinje of Montenegro, and that is saying a good deal ; here there is absolutely nothing to do, and no one to do it, if there were. As a recent traveller justly remarks, "the men of the so-called upper classes pass their time in eating, drinking, smoking, and sleeping. It is wonderful how human beings can bring themselves to endure such a vegetating existence."

The only dissipation or excitement that this capital

offers is its tramway. This is a very unique thing in the way of tramways. It runs for but a short distance, from a certain drinking-place on the beach to another drinking-place near the railway-station. Its only object seems to be to take people from one of these bars to the other. The trains run at such very long intervals, every two days, I believe, that the carriage of railway passengers to and fro is the least of its functions. In the evening a band of three unmusical but noisy musicians is stationed in the front part of the tram; this attracts all the members of the *jeunesse dorée* of Asunción, who fill the car, and, silently smoking the while, travel backwards and forwards from the one public-house to the other, a stoppage of ten minutes being allowed at each terminus for refreshments—the Paraguayans, be it told, being the reverse of teetotalers. In an hour you can make about six passages to and fro in this manner. The first time I travelled on this tramway I was much amused by an incident which is highly characteristic of the way things are done in Asunción. The manager of the tramway happened to be one of the passengers; on the car drawing up opposite the café near the station, this gentleman dismounted, entered, and called for some potable or other. The waiter happened to be engaged in an interesting game of cards with the proprietor of the place, and did not respond with proper waiter-like alacrity to the cry for drinks, but continued dealing the cards, whereon the irate tramway manager called out in a stentorian voice to the patron, "Let that drink be brought me at once, and by, &c., &c., blank, blank! if this ever happens again, I'll take up the tram rails and lay

them down up the other street to Don Pedro's café, and ruin you."

When tramway travelling from bar to bar loses its excitement, no other form of amusement is left one to fall back upon, save the public balls, which bear a strong resemblance to the dignity balls of the West Indies. Most of the streets of Asunción are altogether unlighted at night, and wherever a lantern with its solitary light hangs outside a door, it indicates that there is a public baile within.

CHAPTER IX.

THE *Falcon* lay at anchor a whole month off Asunción before we commenced our downward voyage. During this time we made many pleasant excursions into the interior of this beautiful country, and saw a good deal of the manners and customs of this simple people, but it will be sufficient to describe but one or two of these expeditions in order to convey some idea to my readers of what life in Paraguay is.

Like all others who visit Asunción, we took train to Paraguari, which is the terminus of the line. Lopez intended this railway to connect the capital with Villa Rica, but only forty-two miles were laid down before the war broke out, so it remains half-finished and most dilapidated, like all other of the tyrant's works. The railway station at Asunción is of course a most ambitious structure, with a splendid colonnade and frieze, like a Grecian temple, and might be as old as the Parthenon, judging from its wrecked appearance. It overlooks a great square, one of those wildernesses of red sands and weeds that characterize this city, and much add to its appearance of utter desolation.

The train leaves the capital at six a.m. every other morning; we found two first-class carriages, one of

which we occupied ; it was dirty and ragged, with no glass in one window, and no cushions—this had been the state carriage of Lopez, which he used when he travelled. There were open trucks attached to the train, in which, with bare legs dangling over the sides, were huddled up a chattering, laughing mass of women, with no limited amount of their dusky, well-moulded charms peeping out from their scant, snow-white linen. I was told that a truck is put on to each train for the free use of poor people. When this railway gets into the hands of Englishmen, as they say it soon will (it now belongs to a miserable and miserly Italian company), it will doubtlessly be continued to Villa Rica, an important place and centre of an increasing industry ; for here is cultivated with great success a certain herb with which, and with whose properties, some of my readers are doubtlessly acquainted ; but, at any rate, it will not be amiss to quote what a certain venerable Jesuit father, “ which had long lived there,” wrote concerning its cultivation in these lands, as translated in that quaint old book, “ Purchase’s Pilgrims.” After mentioning other medicinal plants, he says, “ Above all is the Holy Herbe, which serveth for divers diseases, as wounds and coughs, the rheume, &c., and principally it serveth for the sicke of the head, the stomacke, and for the shortness of breath, or the chiña cough. In this country they make certain Coffines of wood, and being full of this herbe dried, and setting it on fire at the one end, they put the other in the mouth and drinke the smoake ; it is one of the Delicates and Dainties of this country, and all the countrymen, and even the Portugals, are even lost for it, and it is

their great vice to be all day and all night laid in their nets to drinke this smoake, and are drunke with it, as if it were with wine." This holy herbe is now more generally known under the name of tobacco, and I suppose the "coffines of wood" are what we term pipes. Even as that knowing old Jesuit describes, are the people of this portion of South America to this day. The holy herbe is still "their great vice," and still do they love "to be laid all day and all night in their nets (hammocks) to drink this smoake."

The tobacco of Villa Rica is in much repute, and cigars are there manufactured with much more skill and care than elsewhere in Paraguay; quantities of these cigars are now exported to England: I should like to know under what name and brand they are there sold.

In our carriage, in addition to ourselves and two English friends, were two Italian priests—more fearful-looking scoundrels I never set eyes upon; they seemed far fitter for the dress of the galley-slave than the soutane. They were exceedingly merry, and both got nearly drunk over a hugh demijohn of wine they had brought with them. One was a robust, purple-visaged, old rascal; the other lean, squint-eyed, and pale, with a Mephistophelian smile. This latter poured into his brother's ears a long succession of "bonnes histoires," ribald and blasphemous in the extreme.

Such is the clergy that Rome now sends to educate these poor Paraguayans, who look up to these scoundrels with a childlike faith in their sanctity. The ordinary punishment of a priest who has committed

some scandalous offence in Europe is an exile to this South American Eden.

The railway traverses a lovely country, undulating and many-fountained—this Paraguay is indeed a land of running water.

There seemed to be a fairly large population, but chiefly of squatters, among these verdant hills. Pretty little quintas and huts, with long, sloping, thatched roofs, peeped out of the glorious groves of oranges and citrons in fruit and flower at the same time; the air was heavy with the perfume of these mingling with that of many flowers, and the ground was strewn everywhere with the golden fruit.

The little one-roomed houses nestled among the oranges, bananas, and papaws, each surrounded with its little plantation of cassava, and the women and plump naked children played or swung in their hammocks outside, in the indolent manner of their race, smoking of course. A land of unsurpassed fertility, whose happy inhabitants have, at any rate, always a sufficiency of food, and whose mild climate renders clothing not a necessary of life. Many tall palms rose above the orange-trees, and in places the hillside was one mass of bright pink, with the blossom of that noble tree, the lapacho, a species of green-heart, whose hard wood is in request for ship-building. Above the more or less cultivated plains and lower slopes rose in the background great domed hills, clothed to the summits with virgin forests. On our left hand lay the extensive lake of Ypacaray, which the railway skirts for many leagues; beyond it is a dark range of mountains, the Cordillera, much in-



fested by tigers, but at whose base a German colony has recently been established.

At each station that we stopped at, was a curious crowd of women who vended fruit, cakes, bits of pork, lace, and what not, to the passengers. The remarkable tidyness and cleanliness of these Guarani women, not only in their persons, but also in the manner they prepare these refreshments for sale, is also very worthy of remark. I believe the Paraguayans are the cleanest people in the world, as well as the most good-tempered. It was very cheerful to see the happy, innocent ways of these childlike little women at the railway stations ; we bought some oranges of one, whereon she insisted on decorating us all with flowers in her gratitude.

At last we reached the station of Paraguari. In front of us were two isolated mountains, between which a strong wind nearly always sweeps. The little town is on an eminence, and, like all these old mission villages, consists of one grass-grown square, a dead-and-alive place, silent and strange, that commands a wonderful view over a great plain of pasture and waving palms, traversed by silver streams, that stretches to a far range of blue mountains. The aspect of this glorious, sunlit plain tended to inspire me with an irresistible desire to traverse it, and explore the unknown lands that lie beyond, even to the great falls of La Guayra ; but this, alas ! was not to be for divers reasons—at least, not then.

On this railway there is a little settlement called Aregua, to which we paid rather an interesting visit that is worth recording. We were accompanied by an Englishman who knew the *géfe* or chief man of

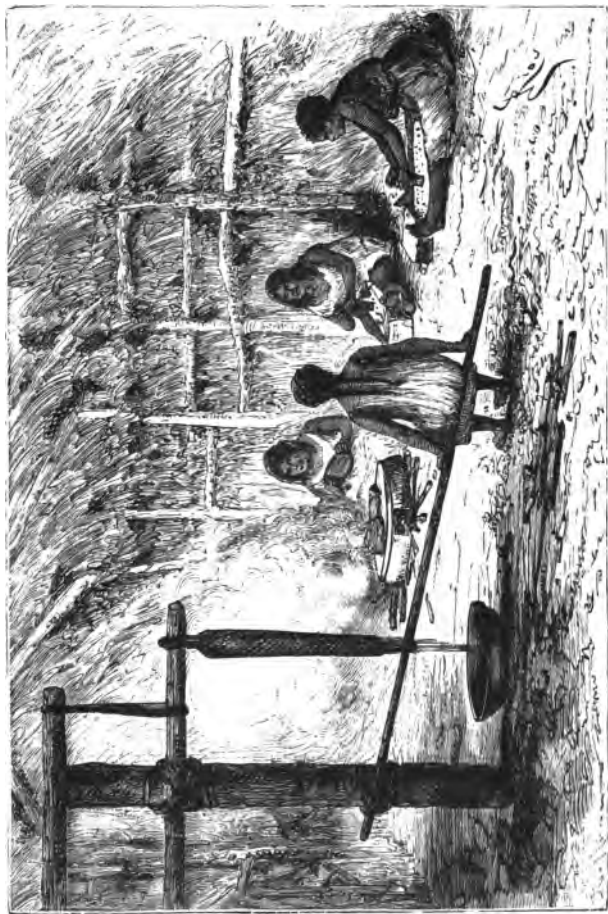
the place, so we determined to give a baile to the population, a very good way indeed of acquiring knowledge of the manners and customs of this people. Accordingly, we left Asunción one morning by the usual six a.m. train, taking with us a couple of demijohns of wine and some beer for the proposed entertainment.

At the station of Leuki we stopped for some minutes, so we purchased from the crowd of women that always awaits the train here some provisions for ourselves, bits of pork and roast parrots laid out on plates with snowy napkins on them, oranges, bananas, and a sufficiency of chipa, or Paraguayan bread, which is very excellent and is made of mandioka flour and eggs. For the benefit of some of my readers, I may mention that the preparation so well-known in England under the name of tapioca is produced from this same mandioka or cassava, which is a root something like a turnip in form, and is the staple bread-making plant of tropical South America.

The railway whistle sounded ; we bid farewell to the merry feminine crowd, and the train resumed its not over rapid progress.

The station of Aregua is some little distance from the town, which is on a height above it ; so we placed our provisions on the heads of some dozen laughing women, who serve as portresses in this land of Amazons, and proceeded in procession up a steep grassy hill.

We found Aregua to be a very typical old mission settlement, and beautifully situated, as are all towns founded by the clever Jesuits. It is built on a sort



Indian method of preparing cassava.



of terrace in the mountain ; behind rise steep domes clothed with forests and groves of citron and orange ; in front of it the land falls down in a grassy slope to the cultivated plain that the railway crosses, beyond which stretches the broad lake of Ypacaray, backed by the dark Cordilleras—an extensive and magnificent view. And the town is so laid out that from every house this fair prospect can be commanded ; for it is built in a square, of which the houses fill three sides, the fourth, that opening on the lake, being left open. The houses are all similar, white-washed and containing two rooms each, one looking on the square, the other on to a little garden behind. The doors of all the houses open out on to a common verandah or colonnade that is carried right round the three sides of the square, and which is paved with the strange, pentagonal, basaltic stones that are found in the Cerro of Aregua, a steep peak that towers above the settlement. The centre of the square, like the slope in front of it, is grass-grown, common pasture for the animals of the townsfolk.

In the lovely evenings of this country the gossips are wont to sit out on this verandah to talk, smoke, and enjoy the fresh breeze that comes over the lake.

There is a church that looks like a barn in the middle of the square, and some way off an erection like a guillotine or some instrument of torture, and indeed it is the latter, for this skeleton scaffolding is no less than the belfry, and at short intervals during the day it is customary for two naked boys to scramble therein and ring the bells in most energetic style. After walking round this square, we found that the population of Aregua may roughly be de-

scribed as two storekeepers, the géfe, the parson, the carpenter, and many women, who occupy their time for the most part in making cigars and lace.

On calling on the géfe, we found him to be a lively, friendly little man, who at once gave orders that a spare house in the square should be hung with hammocks for our reception.

When he heard that we proposed to give a ball, he rejoiced much, and took it upon himself to prepare all the preliminaries. He ordered the largest room in the village to be emptied and to be laid down with the most luxurious carpet that could be found in Aregua; for in this land carpets are laid down, not taken up, in view of a ball, and indeed a carpet is preferable to a mud floor, especially for bare feet. I don't suppose there was another carpet in the town, and that this was kept for such occasions as the present.

Tallow-dips and petroleum-lamps were hung about in the ball-room, and the portion of the verandah opposite it was rendered gay with half a dozen Chinese lanterns. At eight p.m. several crackers were let off outside, for this is the Paraguayan mode of issuing invitations to a ball, and letting the guests know that all is ready. Then the aristocracy of the place poured into the room, with all their little finery about them, merry, determined to be pleased. A few of the women wore in their hair the national golden comb, but there are not many of these now in the poor country, for nearly all the native jewellery was melted down in the cruel war, the patriotic women giving up their ornaments to Lopez that he might mould them into cannon, as was literally done, many of the cap-

tured guns at the Parque of Buenos Ayres containing much gold in their composition.

Outside the ball-room squatted many of the poorer women, with bottles of gin and bits of chipa before them, vending refreshments, for these poor creatures never omit a chance of earning a little money, generally to find its way into the pocket of some idle and worthless lover.

Our band of four musicians was really good, for this people is endowed with much musical taste, which was fostered by the Jesuits. The dancing was of course perfect of its kind. The Paraguayans dance even better than the Argentines—and the Palomita, one of their favourite measures, is very beautiful, and, I should say, would cause a furore if produced on the stage of our opera-house. All smoked. It was curious to see a girl and her partner puffing away at their long cigars across each other's shoulders while waltzing vigorously.

On the morrow after the ball, many of our partners were waiting for us to come out, in order to present to us, with modest grace, bouquets of roses, pinks, and other blossoms, as is the custom of this gentle, flower-loving race. We visited some of these ladies during the day; the amount of furniture in their houses was certainly limited—a couple of chairs, a hammock, and a few cooking utensils about exhausted the inventory—but everything was beautifully clean.

I called on one of my late partners, who was very well dressed at the ball, and, among other things, wore a golden comb and a pair of boots. She had now cast aside her gorgeous attire, was shoeless, clad in the simple white frock, and was engaged in manufacturing

cigars from a pile of tobacco-leaves, which came from her own little garden behind the house.

The gefe would not hear of our leaving Aregua this day, but insisted on our staying till the morrow—the great feast of the Santa Rosa, during which, he said, “there will be great doings; you will not regret having waited with us, you will see.”

Being exceedingly happy and comfortable where we were, in a beautiful country, and surrounded by a verandah full of amiable and pretty women, we thought we could not do better than obey the good-natured village-king; so, to the delight of all the ladies, we postponed our departure.

To occupy the time we borrowed some horses, and rode across the hills behind the town. We ascended a valley whose sides were densely covered with palms, lemons, citrons, oranges, bananas, and other fruits, all growing wild. It was indeed a land of plenty. Beneath us was a rich, red soil. There were many little ranchos in this beautiful bocage, generally built by the banks of clear running streams.

We saw many plants that were new to us, among others a certain palm that produces nuts which form the food of many poor people, and from which good oil can be extracted. There were many sensitive plants also, and those strange carnivorous plants that grasp at and devour passing creatures. Here and there we passed small plantations of tobacco, maize, and coffee, all of which thrive in this land, but are unskilfully cultivated.

We could see the interiors of the ranchos as we passed, for privacy, is not much valued in Paragua, and simple enough they were. Here are the contents



of one of these houses : a half-naked woman, a naked child, a hammock, an earthenware jar, and a fighting-cock. This last the property, and most probably sole property, of her absent lover.

On our return in the evening we sat outside in the verandah with the population of Aregua, laughing, fanning, flirting, and interchanging flowers. We were introduced to the clergyman of this little flock, who was certainly one of the most remarkable members of his profession we had ever come across. The padre was a very stout and jovial man, of pure Guaraní blood ; no article of his attire, save, perhaps, the collar of his coat, betokened his sacred calling. He wore a very broad-brimmed straw hat, no boots, and was an exceedingly slovenly and unshaven old gentleman. He was certainly the very typical Paraguayan parson ; he could only speak his own native Indian dialect, and knew nothing of Spanish, save the names for beer and a few other luxuries. He had been a brave soldier under Lopez, they say ; for priests as well as women and children fought in that terrible war ; but had degenerated into one of the most profligate, lazy, drunken old rascals it was possible to imagine. His head was very much too big for his body, as is not uncommon among this people, and was illumined by a perpetual smile. He had a parrot in the verandah outside his house, whom he had taught to imitate the sound of the weeping women at funerals, the mumbling of the Latin Church service—which the bird, I am sure, understood just as well as his owner,—and several indecencies and blasphemies. The way in which this reverend gentleman passes his life is somewhat as follows. He gets drunk regularly twice a day, and is

on each occasion put into his hammock by the young women who dwell in his house, and who bear relations towards him which are of far from a doubtful character, to sleep off the effects of the caña ; his children—for of these he has a nursery full—the meanwhile fanning him into a refreshing slumber.

Between these orgies, unless they have been too severe, he delivers mass at his church, but generally with a full stomach, and not fasting, as the canons order.

As he waddles off to church, he is always followed by fifty women or so, clad in white, and droning hymns in Guarani.

The mistress of the priest is one of the great ladies of Aregua, for this post is considered an honour in this queer, demoralized country.

The padre is great at raising collections, and combines with his pastorship the profession of usurer, for he advances sums to his parishioners that have good security to show at the moderate interest of sixty per cent.

Notwithstanding all his faults, and his gross ignorance about everything, he is loved, revered, and thought much of by these poor deluded people. I may state that in honour of our arrival he got very drunk, and publicly notified that he would be incapacitated from opening the church for mass during our stay.

The morrow, August 30th, was the feast of the Santa Rosa. This is in the River Plate an ill-omened day, fraught with storms and disaster ; but in Paraguay it is always the occasion of much merry-making.

The géfe undertook to take us to a great festival and baile that was to take place some four leagues off. My readers will doubtless complain that all I have to

describe of my Paraguayan experiences are the perpetual balls, and that I really saw nothing else of the customs and habits of the people. This may be true, but, be it remembered that dancing *is* the life of this race, the one object of existence to which all else is subservient : a woman will save penuriously for months that she may contribute to one of the great public balls, such as this one that I am about to describe.

It was arranged that we should travel with the aristocracy of Aregua in a trolly to the festival, and that each of us should take charge of a lady. My partner of the last ball, who gloried in the possession of boots and a golden comb, kindly honoured me by selecting me as her escort.

Early in the morning we Englishmen waited at the railway station for our companions. Soon we heard a tremendous din of bells on the hill, and beheld the whole population of Aregua flocking into the church. The service was of about three minutes' duration only—I don't suppose our padre was given to long sermons ;—then all the people poured out again, and forthwith forming into procession descended the grassy hill towards us. It was a curious sight. First came the fat padre on his palfry ; then women, bearing aloft a little, gaily-dressed doll, the Santa Rosa ; then all the white-robed women of Aregua, chanting a melancholy dirge, and lastly, the gefé, the carpenter, and others, who seemed to think themselves too important to mingle in a religious procession.

On reaching the railway all the people, save the few who were to travel by trolly, hurried off to the scene of the festival on foot ; some bearing the image of the saint, the others carrying on their heads provisions

of different kinds. They stalked out grandly along the line, a goodnatured, laughing mob, bent upon pleasure.

The trolly was drawn up. First two cases of beer, our votive-offering, was placed on it ; then we ascended, the four Englishmen, the géfe, the carpenter, the padre, who preferred travelling with us to leading the procession—being, as he himself confessed, more partial to beer than to Santa Rosa,—and seven ladies, one for each gallant to look after ; and very pretty they appeared to be, as they sat there excited, happy, and laughing, with all their finery on and roses in their raven locks.

Our motive power consisted of two men, who pushed the crazy trolly along the ill-laid metals. The padre much pitied their labours, and was continually calling for a halt, that they might rest, and that he himself might indulge in another bottle of his favourite beer.

At last we reached a point on the railway that was the nearest to our destination, and the trolly was brought to. Here we found seven horses awaiting us, which the seven men mounted, each taking a fair one behind him. The ladies thought this great fun, though they were rather timid at first, and made many excuses in the soft Guarani that we could not in any way understand, but their pastor soon conquered their scruples, and himself leaping on a horse, took a buxom girl up behind him, and galloped on to show the way. After riding a few miles through the odorous groves of orange and citron, we came to an open place where there was a great white crowd, and a sound of music and merriment. There were here collected about 500 women and 100 men, all clad in white, save

for the occasional scarlet ponchos that some of the men wore. Very few had boots. It was a happy, childish assembly ; there were no quarrels, and none of the men seemed to carry knives behind them—very different, indeed, from the wild, murderous race-meetings of the gauchos of the Pampas. The revellers, indeed, bore far more resemblance to clean children at a school-treat in an English village than to anything else I can think of.

Here was a people well in harmony with its constant associations of perfect climate, birds and flowers and fruits—innocent and natural ; and these are heroes, too, though they evidently know it not, too perfectly brave to be aware of the fact. The women are proud in a simple manner of their beauty and skill in the dance ; the men seem to be proud of nothing ; yet these are the enduring stolid men and women that in the war, as Surgeon Skinner tells us, bore amputations without cry or wince of pain, though no chloroform had been administered to them.

This was what may be termed a subscription picnic, for all here had contributed something towards it ; each woman had brought on her head provisions of some kind, were it only a bowl of milk or a little mandioka, and all shared alike when the dinner was laid out at the long deal tables under the palm-trees.

Many a one of these clean and tidy women had nought in the world save the dress she wore—no house, no bed,—and yet supported some lazy lord on the profits of her lace-making. Perhaps she had toiled for months, in order to save enough for this festival of the Santa Rosa ; for not only had she her own contributions to think of, but she must needs turn out her

rascally lover on that day in a clean shirt, a new pair of pantaloons, and a pocket-full of silver Bolivians, to lay on his prize fighting-cock in the pit, for the Paraguayan is far from free from the usual South American passion for gambling. I believe that nine out of ten men at that festival were thus dependent on the industrious women who wash their clothes for them, cook their chipa, and give them all their little earnings.

The first thing we did on our arrival on the scene was to pay our respects to our host, an old gentleman who occupied a small house, and had the honour of sheltering within it the doll Santa Rosa during the feast.

We seven men and seven ladies, whose aristocratic and booted forms seemed to inspire the revellers with great respect, dismounted and crawled into the house, which was something like a big beehive, with a door not more than three feet high. We then found ourselves in a small, windowless room, at one corner of which was a little table on which stood the image of the saint with three lit candles before her, and around, many not untasteful decorations composed of flowers, native lace, and the feathers of gorgeous parrots and humming-birds.

Not much respect seemed to be paid to her saintship, for padre and all drank, smoked, and sang Bacchanal and other very secular songs in her presence—the latter not badly accompanied by the padre on his guitar.

We were glad to escape from the stifling atmosphere of this room to see the fun outside. The baile was being vigorously carried on under a large pal-

metto-thatched open shed, notwithstanding the intense heat. It had commenced at nine this morning, and would doubtless continue all through the sultry day, all night, all the morrow, and indeed till food and drink for this multitude fell short, when each merry girl would trudge back to her home to work like a slave, while the men slept until the next fiesta.

Besides the dancing, there were other amusements to attract the pleasure-seeker, such as scratch horse-racing, cock-fighting, and tilting at the ring at full gallop—a pretty pastime, at which some of the men were very skilful. The ring used is not much bigger than a wedding-ring, and the lance, a small wooden skewer, not much more than a foot long.

When it was time for the midday dinner, the people sat down at long deal tables to a very substantial repast. We aristocrats were forced to dine in the stifling room where the Santa Rosa was. Our meal was a luxurious one; chipa, roast parrots, and stewed iguana or lizard being but a few of the many delicacies that were spread before us.

The padre did not dine with us, as he had drunk himself into a state of imbecility, as is his wont on every such occasion. The women of the place had tucked his fat carcase into a hammock, and were engaged in fanning his apoplectic-looking visage. Women in all lands show much affection for the ministers of the Church, but the devotion of the Paraguayan women towards their pastors altogether outdoes anything in the way of curate-worship at home. It was very sad for us to observe what a lot these kindly girls made of that horrid old man.

While he thus lay drunk, a boy crawled through the door to ask for his blessing ; whereon the priest swore softly, but horribly, and waved him off—"Not to-day, not to-day those farces," he said, "to-morrow ; to-day is the Santa Rosa, and I am drunk—very drunk," and this in the very presence of the illuminated saint !

As is the custom of the country, our seven fair companions did not sit down with us to dinner, but stood by, serving us silently with all we wanted. When we had concluded our repast, the damsels sat down in their turn, while we stood behind them.

From time to time one of them would take up a delicate morsel on her fork, and hand it up to her cavalier to eat, a pretty little attention that is another custom of the country.

At six in the evening we rode away to the station, so as to catch our trains into Asunçion. The young ladies saw us off and presented us with flowers and sweetmeats to take with us ; then came the farewells, which brought tears into the eyes of these sympathetic daughters of the tropics, and the train started.



## CHAPTER X.

THERE was a race-meeting at Asunción while we were there, an important one too—a sort of Paraguayan Derby; but all seemed very unfamiliar to our eyes. Imagine a tropical moor with palm-trees and bananas scattered about it, and wastes of red sand here and there. The course was worn bare of vegetation by the feet of many horses, and was of soft earth, something like that of Rotten Row.

As is usual in South America, but two horses ran at a time, divided from each other by the partition that I have before described. As is also usual under the South American system of racing, there were about fifty false starts to a race, but no impatience was manifested by the quiet spectators. There was on grand-stand, no book-makers, no merri-ment, or debauch. Twenty white-draped women were squatting in a row with bottles of gin, dulces, or sweet-meats made of guava, prickly pear, and other fruits to vend. Very few of the people, and none of the jockeys, wore boots. There were many of the soldiers about, these too, non-commissioned officers as well as privates, barefooted, as is the economical custom of this army. The uniform of the Paraguayan Tommy

Atkins is not costly; a cheap kepi, a coarse blue blouse, and white pantaloons complete his outfit.

As I watched the racing I noticed that there was a white man, far taller than any Paraguayan, and clad in the dress of an Argentine gaucho, who was watching me intently. At last he addressed me,—

“Do you feel inclined, sir, to back any of this here crowd as is going to run now?”

Surprised at hearing my native tongue spoken by a gaucho on a race-course in the centre of South America, I stared at him speechless for a moment, and soon recognized through the deep tan unmistakable Anglo-Saxon features.

“Well,” I said, “I should not have taken you for a fellow-countryman!”

“No, I suppose not. I’ve been in this country some years now, and don’t think I shall ever get out of it; it’s too much trouble. One gets lazy-like up here; besides, my little woman there”—pointing to one of the vendors of gin and dulce—“is not a bad sort. I don’t much care about leaving her.”

As I evinced some curiosity to learn how he first came to the country, he continued,—

“It’s not a long story. During the war I was a sailor on a British gun-boat lying off Montevideo, deserted, shipped on an Argentine man-o’-war, came up here to fight these poor devils, and somehow, between this and that, I never got back again. Here I am still.”

The lazy lotus-eating spirit of the land had evidently, after all these years, completely possessed the man, and, like Ulysses’ mariners, he had foresworn the stormy seas, and put out of his mind his far island-

home and all that he held dear therein, succumbing to the soft dreamy influences that were ever around him in these regions of perpetual summer, where,

“Sooth to say,  
No living wight could work, ne cared even for play.”

General Caballero, the president of this republic, on whom, as in duty bound, we had paid our respects on our arrival, expressed a desire to visit the *Falcon*, the first yacht that had ever navigated Paraguayan waters. So one afternoon, after giving us due notice he came off to us in the presidential barge with Don Jose Segundo Decoud, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, the Chilian minister, and others. The first magistrate of Paraguay is a fine-looking man with no Indian blood in his veins, indeed more like a good specimen of an English squire than a Paraguayan. The expression of his face is kindly, and no man in the country is more respected and loved. This is the same Caballero who, as general under Lopez, showed such high military qualities, and routed the Brazilians in many a bloody battle. He is not a great diplomatist, but is the very man for Paraguay in the present day—a plain, straightforward trooper without any of the wild ambitions, or impossible political schemes of his predecessors.

Even the Brazilians like Caballero, though he thrashed them so frequently and thoroughly, for he bears a character for humanity, and has never been accused of committing the fearful atrocities that disgraced nearly all the other generals of the tyrant.

The president has a great affection for Englishmen, for, as he says himself, the joviality and frankness of

our race are exactly in accordance with his own tastes.

H.M.S. *Dwarf* ascended the Paraguay recently, and lay off Asunción for some weeks. One day two liberty men set to to fight, right opposite Señor Caballero's house. The soldiers on guard were about to arrest them, when the president, who was watching the fun from an upper window, hurried downstairs and stayed them: "Leave those men alone; they will do no harm," he said. "It is their custom to box." The blue-jackets recognized the chief magistrate, stopped fighting, doffed their hats, and looked rather awkward. But the genial president soon set them at their ease, and sent them off happy to drink at a neighbouring almacén, where they doubtlessly toasted "that 'ere king" as being a "blank good chap."

The president, after thoroughly inspecting the *Falcon*, told us he would like very much to go down to Buenos Ayres with us, but no farther out to sea in so small a vessel.

Señor Decoud, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, with whom I had many opportunities of conversing, is a young, but very able, man. It would be well for South American Republics, were there many more such as he to act as ministers; for he is a man of broad views and of sound education, not a mere ignorant political gambler like most new world statesmen. He speaks English very fairly, and took me to his library, where, among other works, I found a collection of English and French treatises on law, political economy, and philosophy, that did great credit to his powers of selection.

England was a country that evidently interested

him very much, and he had mastered in a wonderful manner the mysteries of our constitution and laws, so utterly inexplicable to foreigners as a rule. When I called on him he would invariably turn the conversation on English questions, and would discuss the codification of law, the Irish difficulty, and similar home matters. His excellency has translated into Spanish several English works, and entertains a great admiration for Mill and others of our writers on political economy, and yet, as I soon perceived, without adopting their more extreme theories.

With General Caballero, the honest, firm ruler, and thoughtful Señor Decoud, Paraguay now, at any rate, can boast of having the best government in South America, but, alas! maybe too late. Political economy cannot solve the Irish question it seems, and will it the Paraguayan? for this state is much in the position of the old Irish cottier. It is burdened by that enormous impossible war-debt due to the armed nations that surround it, as was Paddy by his impossible arrears of rent. And, as in his case, it is not even to the interest of the country to "exploit" her undoubted riches, and increase in material wealth, for it will not be for herself, but her enemies, who will at once pounce down upon any surplus that her budget may show, and insist on heavier taxes being levied on the people in proportion as they become richer. Paraguay is now little better than the cottier tenant of Brazil and the Argentine Republic, two grasping co-landlords. She has not been evicted; neither power has occupied the country, for two reasons; first, because it would be an uncommonly difficult thing to do, notwithstanding that the brave race has

been so nearly annihilated ; secondly, because whichever state did seize the country would, of course, have to accept the war-debt also, and pay her share to her late ally. The remaining way out of the difficulty, viz. a division of Paraguay between the two, would so certainly have brought about dissension and war between the allies that it was not to be thought of.

Such is the present hopeless and difficult position of poor Paraguay, a problem that might well make greater statesmen than Señor Decoud despair. Her present and only rational policy is that of Micawber, "to wait till something turns up." In the meantime her people dance and sing and weave garlands of flowers in the sunshine, like the practical Epicureans that they are.

Arnaud distinguished himself during our stay at Asunçion by crossing the river to the Chaco, and shooting the first stag that had been killed during our expedition. We had been very unlucky in the way of sport, as far as four-footed animals were concerned, in consequence, as I have before explained, of the flooded state of the rivers. But the Paraguay fell rapidly for about a week before our departure from Asunçion, so rapidly that our pilot became alarmed, and anticipated but little water in some of the passages.

I saw in the papers that it had been snowing near Buenos Ayres, while we had been enjoying a temperature of nearly 90° in the shade at Asunçion.

After enjoying ourselves very much for about a month in the capital and the country round it, it was proposed that we should up anchor and descend with the current to the distant ocean once again. But

now a strange thing came to pass. The crew of the *Falcon* had become enamoured of soft, barbarous Paraguay. Jerdein, Arnaud, and even the boys, were loth to leave the land, and declared their intention of deserting the *Falcon* when she reached Buenos Ayres, and returning up the river. The boys had a rather vague idea as to what profession they would take up, but Jerdein and Arnaud talked a good deal about coffee and tobacco-planting, and were exceedingly sanguine about their prospects.

Such was the enervating effect of a month's dwelling among the lotus-eaters. I felt the charm of the land myself; but at the same time an impatience after old associations, the civilization—dingy and ugly though it be—of old London came upon me.

The European cannot long be a lotus-eater. There is an unsatisfied, melancholy expression on the faces of most of the English gentlemen that are settled in Paraguay and cannot get away. That dyspeptic recluse, immortalized by our great poet, who, sad under dark English skies, hungered for the soft savage

“Summer isles of Eden lying in dark-purple spheres of sea,”

was foolish only for a moment, and knew that—

“Better fifty years of Europe than a cycle of Cathay.”

I do not believe that Paraguay is altogether the country to recommend a young Englishman with some capital to emigrate to. Land is cheap, it is true; but labour is not easily procurable, and the distances to the nearest marts for any produce are immense.

On Sunday, the 11th of September, we bid adieu to our friends at Asunción, weighed anchor, and proceeded under all canvas down the river before a dry and hot northerly wind that raised the temperature to 90° in the shade. Our upward journey had occupied ninety-one days, but we accomplished the downward voyage in twenty-two. The river-schooners, with their light draught, had nearly invariably outsailed us against the stream, as I have explained farther back ; but now that the current was with us, our deep draught was in our favour, and not a single homeward-bounder could keep up with us, even when we were running free. When we had to tack we of course defeated the golettas still more easily. Had we chosen to sail by night as well as by day, I am confident that we would have made the fastest voyage on record down the Parana.

Just before we started we were visited by a strange scarecrow, a man, lean, and of starved appearance, clad in a ragged blouse and trousers ; his naked feet were sore, swollen, and full of chigos. He took off his old greasy cap, and commenced to address us with a voice hoarse and indistinct from long exposure to the heavy night-dews, in very excellent French. He said he was a starving Frenchman. He wanted to get down to Buenos Ayres, where he might find employment. Would we give him a passage in our vessel ? He would work his way willingly. We consented to take the poor fellow with us as a deck-passenger. He certainly did work his passage with good-will, always trying to make work of some kind to do, when there was none very obvious at hand.



Washing was his great forte; he would wash everything without waiting for orders, from the plates to the tiller. His nautical education had been neglected, but he tried his best to become a sailor during the voyage.

To look after the fore-sheet, when we went about, was his especial delight. The fierce, earnest way in which he would tackle it each time was very laudable. He evidently thought that the safety of the vessel entirely depended on his proper handling of this rope. He came to look upon it as an enemy to be bravely attacked, yet cautiously circumvented; but at first he used to charge it with the blind *elan* peculiar to his race, till he was brought to his senses by sundry hard knocks on the head from the heavy fore-sheet block, as it banged about backwards and forwards, while the vessel was coming into stays.

He explained that he was a lithographic workman, and had imprudently left Paris for Buenos Ayres, where he was told wages were high. At Buenos Ayres he discovered there was no room for him, and was advised to go to Asunción, in which capital he found that there was still less demand for men of his trade, seeing that there is not a single lithographic establishment. His career had been rather a chequered one. He had fought for the commune in Paris, impressed, he said, against his will, and had received a severe bayonet-wound in the leg. He arrived at Buenos Ayres twenty months back, just in time for the last revolution there. Having no papers of nationality with him to prove that he was a Frenchman, he was again impressed, and forced to fight against his will, this time receiving a rifle-ball in the

head as a trophy. In Paraguay, being unable to find work, he had lived on oranges in the woods, a not very fattening diet, though the Paraguayan troops often fought for weeks on no other food than this.

We had three other passengers as far as Villeta, friends of ours, who had been invited as well as ourselves to a baile at that town, given in our honour by the captain of the port. These were a money-lender, an ex-minister of finance, and a merchant ; for this is a democratic country, wherein presidents, usurers, publicans, and sinners seem to be all on much of a same footing, and associate together in a most natural way.

Current and strong wind both being with us, we reached Villeta in three hours, and came to an anchor off the little town. Like Aregua and many other of the old Jesuit settlements, it is built on the summit of a lofty, grassy down that slopes down to the water's edge ; it consists of one square, three sides of which are of low houses connected by a deep verandah, the fourth, that looking towards the river, being open, four ancient black wooden crosses of huge size planted at equal distances along it.

There was a steamer and several schooners lying along the shore, which were being loaded with oranges by a long stream of laughing white-draped girls. Mountains of the golden fruit lay on the bank, while lumbering bullock-waggon constantly brought down fresh supplies from the groves, a quaint scene very characteristic of Paraguay.

We landed, ascended the down, and found our host, Colonel Godoy, and a sumptuous repast awaiting us.

This gentleman, now commandante of the port, and *géfe* of Villeta, is a very good type indeed of the Paraguayan man, such as there were many of before that war of annihilation. Not tall, but very broad and muscular, with a profusion of curly black hair, bright black eyes, and a broad mouth that is ever opening to smile and laugh, revealing two rows of large white teeth, he presents a remarkable and pleasing exterior. But beneath the joviality that he shares with all his race, it is easy to perceive that there lurks something of the savage, tigerish spirit, that is also in the Paraguayan blood, though it be but seldom awakened. Even Lopez was an amiable man enough, till he had tasted blood.

Señor Godoy is a well-known character; he was one of Lopez's most dashing and valiant colonels, and distinguished himself on many occasions during the sanguinary five years' war. He received in different actions no less than fifteen wounds, of which some were very severe. I may mention that the foreign surgeons that were attached to the Paraguayan forces state that not only did these men bear the most painful wounds and amputations with extraordinary stoicism, but that they recovered rapidly in cases that would have almost certainly proved fatal to Europeans. Of the negro troops of Brazil they report exactly the reverse.

One of the chief traits of the Paraguayan character, brought about by the long training of the Jesuits, is complete submission to any constituted authority, else how can we explain the unquestioning manner in which the decrees of the tyrant Lopez were obeyed? When he ordered every officer that proved unsuc-

cessful in action to be shot, when he put to death so many of the best and noblest of the land, simply because they were such, there was no attempt at disobedience, no symptoms of rebellion displayed themselves. Thus Colonel Godoy, who was narrating some of his experiences to us, said, "When we were marching to X——, there were many women and children with us, weak, half-starving, who greatly impeded our progress; Lopez, hearing of this, enjoined me to cause every man, woman, or child, who could not keep up with the rest, to be shot. Thus in many cases my men had to shoot their own sick relatives: it was butcher's work; I did not like it; but we had received the order, and had of course to obey the chief."

But this evening the gallant colonel was employed in a manner more congenial to his kindly nature. After dinner he brought out his guitar, and, accompanying himself the while, sang to us in a fine deep voice the wild songs of the Guarani; Narancaros, or songs of the orange-gatherers, and war-songs breathing bitter contempt for the "Monkeys of Brazil."

When all was ready for the baile, the colonel ordered his bare-footed soldiers without to fire their muskets and let off crackers, as an invitation to the townsfolk. They were all prepared for this, and immediately responded to the summons; the women flocked in—the booted ladies and the unbooted maidens that had been hard at work loading the vessels with oranges all day mixing familiarly in very republican sisterhood. In this land equality is not merely a political watchword, but here alone it is possible, for all men and women are equally well-bred, all "gentle"

in their manners—the ostentation and false pride of the patrician being as unknown as the coarse brutality and vulgarity of the plebeian.

When one wearied of dancing, it was pleasant to leave the stifling ball-room and walk awhile in the grass-grown square. The view from the four old crosses on the edge of the down was impressive. The broad river gleamed under a brilliant moon ; beyond it stretched a long streak of flame, where savage Indians had fired the Chaco in a great ring, so as to hem in and destroy the tigers and wild beasts, whose skins formed their clothing. After a pyrotechnic display with some of the rockets and blue lights, from the *Falcon's* stores, the ball broke up. The colonel and his men stretched some hides out in the middle of the square, the usual bed-place of the tough veteran, and lay down to sleep on them, while we returned on board.

The spring was now advancing, and we found it uncomfortably hot in the cabin at night, so throughout the downward voyage all hands were wont to sleep on deck, of course under the mosquito-nets, for these pests were much more numerous than they had been during the upward journey.

Different insects now pestered us at different hours of the day, so we were able to divide our time very accurately according to their visitations. In the morning, when the sun had acquired an altitude of about twenty degrees, the mosquitoes retired ; and then turned out in dense clouds annoying little winged insects that possessed long suckers, and left black spots behind, where their probes had entered the skin. In the afternoon these would be relieved by

the equally troublesome sand-flies, who would bite vigorously until it was mosquito time again at sunset.

Before leaving Villeta on the morrow after the ball, I was button-holed in the regular ancient mariner style, by a venerable Genoese, with a glistening, fascinating eye, and a tangled mass of snowy hair.

Said he, "I have a disclosure to make unto you ; there is, I believe, gold ! gold ! gold ! unlimited gold !" and he stretched out his arms as if to encircle a huge sack of the precious metal ; "gold ! and I know where it is ; come with me and get it. The Indians have told me—up the Pilcomayo—the sands are made of gold ; they have cooking-vessels now of gold that their civilized ancestors made. I have no money ; I cannot get a boat to go up the river and get all this gold. O misery ! misery ! all this gold, and I cannot get at it—and now," seizing me fiercely by the arm, and speaking slowly and distinctly ; "you are a milordo Ingleze, you have some gold ; buy a steam-launch ; take me, we will go together up the Rio Pilcomayo, and we will get it all. Gold ! do you hear ? gold. O ! holy Mary, gold !"

I could not deliver myself from the clutches of this enthusiastic old man until I had promised to think the matter over ; but he shook his head sadly at my half-hearted manner as he let me go. "Gold, gold ! all that gold glittering in the sands for us—and you hesitate !"

There was unmistakable madness in the glare of the man's eye ; and Don Juan explained that his fellow-countryman, commencing life as a sailor, had become a sea-captain, then an owner of many ships,

and lastly had invested all his capital in lands and vast herds of cattle in this neighbourhood.

Now it happened about three years back that the Asunción newspaper accused an Italian of having murdered a certain woman in that town. An Italian forthwith proceeded to the newspaper office, and blew out the editor's brains with a revolver. The Italians, of whom there are many in Asunción, took their countryman's part, and for eight days fought the government troops. At the head of this Italian revolution, as it was called, was my acquaintance of the snowy locks and the glistening eye. When the émeute was put down the government punished him by confiscating all his lands and cattle—utterly beggaring him. This calamity affected his brain, and now he roams about, an innocent but wild and weird old man, with a crazy head chock-full of visionary schemes; not, however, that the Pilcomayo goldscheme is necessarily such, for many of these tributaries of the Rio de la Plata wash down gold, though it is doubtful whether the exploration of this particular stream would prove profitable in that way.

On the 13th of September we again experienced one of those remarkable and sudden falls of the temperature that are such a feature of this climate. We had been sailing all day before a light north wind under a cloudless sky, the thermometer registering 93° in the shade, when suddenly the familiar haze of the dust-storm was seen rising on the southern horizon, and the quick gathering masses of cloud indicated the approach of the Pampero hurricane. We hastily lowered our main-sail, and shifted jibs. We were at this moment sailing close by the Paraguayan shore.

and passing a lovely grove of lapachos and oranges glowing like fire under the lurid glare which the sun, shining through flying clouds of dust, cast upon all nature.

In this grove were some ranchos, the occupants of which, three women, with flowing white robes, draping but not concealing the beauty of their statuesque forms, on seeing us, came down to the river bank, and like the maiden of Longfellow's "Excelsior," called out to us in silvery voices, "Go no farther, come and anchor here, safe is this port; see the tempest comes." But, like Longfellow's youth, we were obdurate to the voices of these sirens, and, with reluctance, brushing the tears from our eyes, we shook our heads and shouted back "Excelsior!" or something to that effect, and sailed on towards the storm.

Of a sudden our sails were taken aback, and with terrific thunder, lightning, and rain, the pampero broke on us. From 93° the thermometer fell rapidly to 73°, which seemed quite cold to us. We tacked down the river against the gale until sunset, under mizzen and head canvas alone.

On the 16th of September we anchored for an hour off Formosa, the Argentine military settlement on the Chaco shore. We found here a village of log-huts, occupied by a battalion of troops, of whom many were employed in clearing the forest, digging drains, carpentering, tinkering, and so on. We were told that these were military prisoners, and received no pay for their work. In this case about a third of the battalion must have been prisoners at the time of our visit, a fact not much to be wondered at, for the Argentine soldiery is raised from the dregs of the populace.



These men looked like the thorough scoundrels they were, but at the same time had a very hardy appearance, and indeed even hostile critics allow them to be splendid troops, brave, and enduring fatigue and hunger with the fortitude of the Indians themselves

We had run short of salt meat, but found it impossible to purchase any at Formosa, for regular rations are served out daily to soldiers and civilians by the commissary, and he is forbidden to supply stores to passing schooners or other strangers.

## CHAPTER XI.

WE reached Villa Pillar on the 15th of September. We found at anchor off here two schooners, the *Rosa* and the *Fradalanza*—one laden with oranges, the other with hard-wood. Don Juan was acquainted with the pilots of these craft, and after holding a consultation with them, advised us, though we might lose a few days by it, to await their departure on the morrow, and keep them company as far as Rosario, “for,” he explained, “the Parana, they say, is now very low, and if we do run ashore going down the river, we shall be unable to get off again without the assistance of some other vessel.”

Seeing the justice of his remarks, we acceded to his proposition. When the river is low, it is customary for vessels thus to sail in company; that one with the greatest draught and the best pilot leads the way; if she strikes, those behind immediately cast their anchors, and, passing hawsers to the leader, as a rule manage to haul her off. Again, when there is doubt about a channel, a boat is sent ahead to sound, and as one boat can do this for the whole fleet, much labour is thus saved.

On the 16th of September, at a signal from the

admiral, the Anglo-Spano-Italian squadron got under weigh and proceeded down the river, in single file, with a space of about 150 yards between the vessels. I must explain that one of the schooners was Italian, the other Spanish. The former, which drew as much water as ourselves, was the flagship, and led the way.

We found that we had to keep the *Falcon* under easy canvas, so as not to outsail our consorts; we were invariably more than a match for either of them, whether in running, tacking, or drifting down stream in a calm.

On the 17th of September, a hot, cloudless, windless day, the fleet drifted out of the Paraguay into the Parana, and we bid adieu to the pleasant land of women.

And now we observed that the appearance of the Rio Parana had undergone a great change since we had ascended it some two months back. The waters had so much receded, that great banks of yellow sand stretched far out into the stream from the jungly shores, or formed long islands in its centre, between which in places were narrow, rapid channels, wherein was scarcely sufficient water to float our craft. And now all the animal life that had been driven by the flood into the inner fastnesses of the Chaco, had come down once more to the river banks, as we perceived from the cries of many tigers, pumas, and other beasts that made each night hideous as we lay at anchor under the shore.

On several occasions we managed to obtain some very good sport during this downward voyage, succeeded in killing some stags, but were unsuccessful in all our attempts to slay the crafty jaguar. The ducks, turkeys, and geese were as numerous as ever,

and the alligators at the approach of spring had come out in much larger numbers, and lay basking on the hot sands in rows of twenties.

On this day we passed Corrientes, near which we met the SS. *Taraquay*, bound for Asunción, being now about four days behind her time, in consequence of having grounded on one of the shallows.

Our flagship ran ashore early in the day, but we soon hauled her off; later on both the *Rosa* and *Falcon* ran very hard on to an extensive bank that was unknown to the pilots, having been formed since our upward voyage. As all the endeavours of ourselves and our friends failed to get us off, the fleet had to come to an anchor. We put out our bower in the deep water, and by keeping the chain constantly taut, we gradually ate our way off the bank during the night.

During the 18th of September the fleet proceeded with great caution, for the bed of the river had entirely changed hereabouts, and puzzling sandbanks and shoals obstructed the navigation. Constantly we came to an anchor, while boats were sent ahead to sound and pick out a channel. Notwithstanding all our precautions the *Rosa* ran ashore, and four hours' hard work followed before she was dragged off again, a contingent being sent from the crew of each vessel to render assistance at the capstans and tackles.

Some delay was caused before the fleet could get under weigh on the 19th of September, for the anchors of the *Falcon* and *Fradalanza* had fouled some sunken trees. By dint of some labour we raised our anchors to the water's edge, and then cut away the branches that encumbered them with hatchets, whereupon they

immediately sank, being of a wood that is as hard and heavy as ebony.

This day we passed the steamer *Messenger* hard aground ; for three days her captain vainly endeavoured to get her off, while the passengers, the stores provided for whom had fallen short, grumbled not a little ; the sound of many cursings and lamentations reached us as we passed the unfortunate vessel. This evening we anchored off Bellavista, and laid in provisions, amongst others very smokable cigars at six shillings for five hundred. The storekeeper, who had supplied us before, recognized us from afar off, and shouted to all who might be interested in the news, that the English "Ballandra de Guerra" had returned.

The riverine folk seemingly by one consent used to call the *Falcon* the "Ballandra de Guerra," as best describing her appearance and character generally. The term may be translated "war-lighter," the English war-lighter, verily a queer title.

The people of Bellavista made anxious inquiries after the SS. *Messenger*, which they had been expecting for some days.

On the 20th of September we sailed before a light north wind till we approached Goya ; near here the pilots anticipated much difficulty, for the river is broad and very shallow, so orders were given to the squadron to come to an anchor, while a boat was sent ahead to thoroughly explore the channel. Here there were no less than four vessels aground, showing how difficult and tedious is the navigation when the river is as low as it now was.

Having safely sailed by these dangerous passages, we proceeded till near sunset, when the northerly

wind died away and the appearance of the heavens threatened an imminent tempest from the southern quarter, so we came to an anchor for the night. Three other vessels had now joined our squadron ; thus there were now no less than seven of us anchored in single file along the Chaco bank, a force sufficient to resist successfully any attack of Gauchos or Chaco Indians.

There was not a single native of South America on board these vessels, the crews being entirely composed of Genoese, Neapolitans, Spaniards, Greeks, and Dalmatians. The Argentines hate the sea and all that is connected with it, and the life of a mariner "pent up in a wooden box," as one once put it to me, is utterly uncongenial to their character.

On the 21st of September the pampero blew with such fury that the seven pilots resolved not to weigh anchor until it subsided. Even an upward-bound vessel scudding under a tiny rag did not seem inclined to make use of the gale which of course was fair for her, but dropped her anchor in the midst of our fleet. She had come from Montevideo, and her captain reported a revolution in Uruguay. He told us that the agitator Latorre had returned from exile, and was marching on the capital at the head of an army of Gauchos. We were in no way surprised at the news, for of all South American people probably none are so devoted to that "glorious institution of a free people," revolution, as are the citizens of fair Montevideo.

This day we employed in shooting in the Chaco, which was hereabouts a terrible tangle of confused growth, only to be traversed by following the sandy beds of tributary streams.

In the evening we repaired to a musical entertainment on the admiral's ship (every night a similar party was given on one vessel or the other), and heard our friends Luigi, Juan, Pedro, Pancho, Andrea, Francisco, and the rest of them, not to forget our Admiral Bartolo, sing the sea-songs of Genoa, the gondola chants of Venice, Spanish and Guarani love songs, and the like. The company smoked largely, and a huge vessel of wine was handed round, which we held high above our heads, pouring the thin purple stream from the small orifice into our mouths as is the custom of the Italians.

Throughout the 22nd and 23rd of September we sailed without the occurrence of any mishap, on the latter day making no less than forty-five leagues, and passing La Paz.

On the 24th of September we passed Urquiza, and taking the Santa Fé channel, not the Parana channel, which we had pursued on our upward voyage, came to an anchor some two leagues below Diamante, in consequence of the flag-ship having run hard on a shoal. After prolonged labour, all the other vessels of the squadron lending assistance, it was found impossible to move her, and as the pilots discovered that the river was still falling, it was determined that we should desert our unfortunate admiral, for our stopping would not be of any use. Accordingly the word was given to up anchor and proceed. The admiral, as we heard afterwards, had to take two-thirds of his cargo out of his vessel before she would float, and was delayed nearly two weeks at this spot, which unfortunate occurrence more than ate up all the profits of his four months' voyage.

On Monday, the 26th of September, we reached Rosario. We found the thermometer was only 66° in the shade; we had left the regions of perpetual summer, and the Buenos Ayres spring struck us as uncomfortably cold after the climate we had recently been enjoying.

After remaining two days at Rosario, we once more weighed anchor, first bidding farewell to our consorts, for the captains were trying to dispose of their cargoes in this port, and so save the tedious voyage to the Boca and back.

Overtaking and outsailing every vessel of whatsoever tonnage and rig that we encountered, we sailed by Zarate and Campana, entered once more the narrow channels of the Delta, whose willow and peach-clad banks were fresh and green in this glorious spring weather of the River Plate, passed by the pretty quintas of the market-gardeners, whence the Basque and Italian girls waved their kerchiefs to us as we went by; and on the 2nd of October came to an anchor at our old berth in the Tigre, 143 days since we had sailed from it for our cruise up the great rivers.

And now it was that the old crew of the little *Falcon* was broken up, scattered in different directions, while I was left alone on board of her to ponder how I should proceed on the voyage. Jerdein and Arnaud, enamoured, as I have before said, of Paraguay, prepared to return to that soft climate. As both of them had long since become thoroughly weary of the cruise, and no longer threw themselves heartily into it, this was perhaps as well for me; besides which, I now procured a crew of professional



sailors, who of course were incomparably more efficient than the amateurs that had sailed from England with me.

Arthur, the boy, also refused to proceed on the voyage, and asked to be paid off. I accordingly gave him his discharge, arrears of pay, and certain words of good advice, in reference to the dangers of this rough seaport of Buenos Ayres, which I was fully aware he would utterly disregard.

Jim also refused to go to sea in the *Falcon*. He said she was too small for the ocean; he preferred a bigger vessel.

But when it was known that I wanted men, no lack of volunteers presented themselves: three Spaniards from the *Capitania* of the *Tigre* offered to desert and join me, but I did not like the look of them, still less the appearance of the drunken, dirty, runaway English sailors, or rather sham sailors, that loafed on the beach of Buenos Ayres; so I repaired to the *Boca del Riachuelo*, the cut-throat Italian and Greek colony that I have before described, but in which I knew I could find as many honest seamen as I required.

To pick up a decent British sailor in these foreign ports is very difficult, as British skippers know too well.

I wandered about the crowded quays and streets of the *Boca*, a seaport that reminded me of many an old Mediterranean harbour; for, indeed, all its inhabitants and sailors are natives of the fair shores of that inland sea, and have brought their habits of life and style of architecture to the banks of this little South American river.

Don Juan, our late pilot, accompanied me in my

search ; we entered the *cafés* that he knew to be the haunt of Genoese mariners, and after passing over several whose physiognomies were a trifle too cut-throat, we selected three likely-looking fellows.

As the *Falcon* required caulking and a general overhauling before she was fit for sea, I determined to sail her from the Tigre to the Boca, the latter being a very convenient place for fitting out a small vessel.

On the 10th of October my new crew came on board, and as is the custom of Italian mariners, brought such mountains of luggage and bedding with them that it would have filled up all the cabins of the *Falcon*, so I was compelled to make them put three-quarters of it on shore again, much to their chagrin. A British sailor generally ships with nothing but the clothes he stands in, in the way of *impedimenta* ; but his Italian brother has a very old-clothesman mania for accumulating rags of all sorts. He never throws away a coat or other garment, though it be so rent and worn that he cannot possibly wear it, but hoards up all, till after some years' service at sea he is the proud possessor of five or six huge canvas sacks of dirty shreds, which he carries with him wherever he goes, though they are not of the slightest use to him.

On sailing out of the River Tigre we found from the tide-metre on the San Fernando mole, that there were but six feet of water on the bar outside. (The reader will remember that on entering the river we were aground on this bar a whole night during a gale.) For five days of rain and wind we lay at anchor off the San Fernando, waiting for the rise of the water, the

monotony being only broken by a clumsy Argentine man-of-war, or rather old-woman-of-war, that deliberately ran into us, doubled up our davits, carried away a main shroud, and would perhaps have sunk us, had we not promptly given our vessel more chain. The lubberly officer who was in charge of this steamer, not contented with having inflicted this damage, proceeded to carry away the bowsprit of a schooner that was at anchor below us, and then while endeavouring to turn so as to enter the San Fernando Canal, ran the nose of his vessel with considerable force against the stone mole.

On the 16th of September a change of the wind caused the water to rise about a foot; so weighing anchor, we safely crossed the shallows and scudded before heavy squalls of rain and wind down the coast, past the long quays of Buenos Ayres to the entrance of the river Riachuelo.

We found that the Boca was full of small craft that had run in from the inner roads for refuge from the bad weather, but we managed to squeeze our way through the crowd and pick up a convenient berth alongside the rickety wooden quay, between a German barque and an Italian orange-schooner.

And now from sunrise to sunset for many days there was a constant bustle on board the *Falcon*; caulking, painting, stowing provisions, rigging; in short, thoroughly preparing the vessel for her lengthy homeward cruise.

The Italians in the Boca took great interest in our proceedings, and there was always a little crowd watching us from the quay. Seeing that I had taken a crew of their own countrymen in preference to

any others, these earringed and gay-sashed mariners took a pride in the little vessel, and showed us much sympathy.

Jerdein and all other Buenos Ayres friends expostulated with me on the madness of sailing with an Italian crew; my throat, they said, would certainly be cut by these notorious ruffians of the Boca. But I knew more about Italians than any of my friends, and had gained no slight experience of the ways of the population of all the Mediterranean coasts in several previous travels, so felt confident; besides, the men that I had engaged were all well known in the Boca, and of highly respectable character.

It is true that a little contretemps occurred before the men had been three days on board that led to the discharge of one of them. While I was on shore for an hour or so, this fellow, who it seems was of a quarrelsome nature, refused to obey the orders of the man I had appointed mate, and, on being remonstrated with, or more probably sworn at, drew his knife and attempted to murder his officer, but his object was frustrated by a knock on the head with a capstan bar. On returning and hearing this story, I considered that the "bag and baggage" policy was the best adapted for the circumstances, and packed him off on the spot with his *impedimenta*.

Only once again did anything like this occur while these men served under me, and that also during my absence, for nothing could exceed the alacrity of their obedience and civility to myself.

When the *Falcon* was ready to sail, looking smart enough with her fresh paint and new main-sail, mizzen, and fore-sail, a ragged and miserable-looking

object presented himself on board. The return of the prodigal boy, Arthur, had come to pass as I had anticipated. He had spent all his pay, sold all his clothes, and looked very dirty and thoroughly ashamed of himself. He now of course wished to re-ship on the *Falcon*. After putting before him the heinousness of his offence in deserting me at a pinch as he had done, and warning him as to the results of ever behaving in like manner again, I took him back, but killed no fatted calf for the reprobate; on the contrary, gave him no leave on shore, and plenty of hard work, to counteract the bad effects of his ten days' debauch, during which time he had been living on his accumulated arrears of pay at the rate of about 1000*l.* a year. We did not require him now on the *Falcon*, for I had engaged another man to take the murderously-inclined one's place, and I knew he would be ever quarrelling with the foreigners; but to leave the scapegrace at Buenos Ayres would have been to insure his speedy perdition, so I felt bound to take him away.

The crew of the *Falcon* now consisted of myself, captain; Pellegró Lavagna, mate; Paulo Ciarlo, cook and seaman; Giobatta Panissa, seaman, and Arthur Cotton, boy. The mate was a good-looking young Genoese of twenty-six, a good fellow, a dandy when on shore, but rather a timid sailor, and one who could not inspire the others with due respect, hence frequent quarrels, and in two cases, as before related, the drawing of sheath knives.

Paulo Ciarlo, a piratical-looking, bronzed fellow of thirty, was not only an excellent cook, but an admirable fore-and-aft sailor, a plucky man, and one

with whom I never had occasion to find fault during his stay on board the *Falcon*.

Giobatta Panissa, who I afterwards found dared not return to his native land in consequence of having been a ringleader in a serious mutiny on board an Italian barque, did not turn out well. He was a young fellow with thick black eyebrows and a cruel mouth, with a surly and forbidding expression. He was not a good sailor, and could not be trusted at the tiller in bad weather; indeed, I discovered his real profession was that of fireman on board steamers. He was cowardly but quarrelsome, and required constant suppression, which he got. This Panissa was the hero of the second knife adventure. The mate and Panissa took the port watch, Ciarlo, Arthur and myself the starboard.

And now the outward voyage of the *Falcon* was completed, and she lay moored to the Boca quay ready for her homeward departure. The route that I had chosen for myself was rather a circuitous one. I purposed coasting up the eastern shores of the South-American continent as far as the West India Islands, and thence to cross the North Atlantic and make for old England. In describing this voyage, I shall have to tell how we sailed to the desert islands of Martin Vas and Trinidad, and there explored strange volcanic peaks and ravines, where, I believe, no man before us had trod, and where the savage birds, not knowing how formidable a foe is man, attacked us with fury as we traversed the rocky defiles which they peopled in their tens of thousands; thence how we once again sailed into the emerald waters of the Reconcavo of Bahia and saw old friends;

how we cruised for a week round the beautiful bay and up its tributary rivers, that pierce a tropical paradise ; how we visited Maceio, and Pernambuco, the Brazilian Venice ; and how doubling Cape La Roque, we were carried rapidly up the coast by a fresh wind that ever blew right aft, and a strong, never-changing current of hot water, the same that thousands of miles further on, after it has traversed the Gulf of Mexico, is known as the Gulf Stream ; how we passed by the turbid mouth of the Amazon, greatest of rivers, crossed the equator once more, sailed by unhealthy Cayenne, and the mangrove swamps of Dutch Guiana to Demerara, where we spent a pleasant time, and so on to Barbados, where, for reasons that will be told in their right places, the *Falcon* was hauled up on to the sandy beach, and laid up for a season under the cocoa-palms and poisonous manchineals.

## CHAPTER XII.

AT half-past four on the morning of the 4th of November, we were outside the Boca harbour, homeward bound at last. We shaped our course for Montevideo, at which port I had to call, having left my chronometers there during my travels in the River Plate Republics. It was blowing very hard from the southwest, so we scudded under three-reefed main-sail, passing the *Chico* light-ship at nine a.m., having run forty-five miles in four and a half hours, a speed which astonished somewhat my Italian mariners.

It was somewhere near here that we hove to and filled our breakers and tanks with the muddy, yet sweet and wholesome, water of the estuary, as is the practice of outward-bound vessels. The water was in no way brackish, though we were out of sight of land, and to all appearance in the midst of a tempestuous ocean.

The pampero had by this time raised the usual steep breaking seas that render the navigation of these shallow waters so perilous, and my Italians expressed great delight and astonishment when they observed how splendidly the little *Falcon* rose to each sea, steering perfectly easily all the while.



Near the *Chico* we passed the new Argentine man-of-war, the *Admirante Brown*. This vessel was constructed in England, and recently steamed over the Atlantic with the intention of reaching some port of the Argentine Republic. This she has not done, and never will do, for it is found that this white elephant draws too much water to enter Argentine waters at all, so here she remains at anchor in the high seas, disconsolately rolling about, a constant butt for the caricaturists and comic papers of Montevideo.

At about two p.m. we passed the *Cuirassier* lightship. The sea near here was tumbling about very uncomfortably, for the tide and wind were opposed to each other. Some ten miles further on we passed close to a barque of about 500 tons that had evidently foundered within a few hours. As the depth of the estuary hereabouts is not much more than five fathoms, her masts were above water, her canvas was still on her, flapping about and tearing in the violent wind, with a noise like that of irregular musketry fire. There were no men to be seen in her rigging, so we presumed some passing vessel had rendered assistance to the crew. This, we learnt later on at Montevideo, had been the case. This vessel was an old Italian wooden corvette of war that had recently been sold to some Italians of Montevideo, who had converted her into a river merchant barque.

At nine p.m., after a fast voyage of sixteen hours, we came to an anchor off the custom-house of Montevideo, where we lay all night, rolling and pitching into the nasty seas that make this so-called harbour so uncomfortable.

I had purposed remaining at Montevideo but four days, which I calculated was a sufficient time wherein to complete all our preparations for sea, but circumstances, in the shape of a violent storm, considerably delayed our departure.

During our outward voyage we had enjoyed singular immunity from bad weather, but during the first month or so of our homeward journey we certainly encountered more than our share of it. It is true that this was the tempestuous season of this portion of the South Atlantic, when fierce pamperos are of frequent occurrence.

The weather had been unsettled for some time. On the 6th of November, two days after our arrival at Montevideo, the barometer commenced to fall steadily. It was intensely close and hot throughout the day, and in the afternoon we observed that our rigging was entirely covered with those fine filaments, like spiders' webs, which sailors that have visited these seas call Virgin's threads. This phenomenon is common on the River Plate, and is said to precede a strong pampero. Throughout the following day there were many clear signs of an impending storm visible, and ancient mariners on shore shook their heads.

On the morning of the 8th of November it was blowing hard, but it was not until five in the evening that the pampero burst upon us, with its usual suddenness, but with a fury that I have never experienced in any wind before or since. The pampero of these seas is a true hurricane, and though not of so long duration as the hurricanes of the West Indies and other seas, it is often quite as violent as long as it lasts.

On this occasion a perfectly clear sky became of a sudden quite obscured to us by great whirling clouds of dust, that enveloped the whole city and the roads. Then the hurricane came down with a great roar, swung all the vessels round with a violent jerk, causing many to drag their anchors, thereby fouling each other, and inflicting much damage. We had two anchors down, with sixty fathoms of chain on each, and dragged but an inconsiderable distance. But the strain on our chains was tremendous; we seemed to be drawn under water at times during the more violent gusts. We pitched and tumbled about in a manner that threatened to be even dangerous, and as the wind blew off all the tops of the waves, driving solid sheets of water through the air, these flew over our decks, almost drowning any one who ventured above. We pitched our bows, too, so deep into the seas, that I entertained serious fears at times lest we should founder at anchor. This first squall was far too furious to last long; it was circular, as all such very violent storms are, going round all the points of the compass. The dust was soon blown away, and then, as far as one could see it through the blinding spray, the aspect of the sea, sky, and city under this fearful visitation was really awful and magnificent. The atmosphere passed through several extraordinary changes of colour, now brick-red, now pale-green; the ships, houses, and vegetation all assuming the same hue. The lightning, forked and purple in colour, was vivid, as it perhaps only can be in this highly electric region. Other electric phenomena were not wanting. Each wave in the roads was capped with a flame of fire, and the large

hailstones that fell seemed to be mixed with showers of sparks.

My mate managed to yell into my ears, that never before had he witnessed such a pampero, and perhaps he was right, for the Montevidean papers of the morrow put this down as the fiercest pampero that had occurred in the memory of man. The numerous casualties on shore and afloat testified to the power of the wind. Many people were killed, and the city was filled with consternation, hundreds of trees were uprooted, fifteen strong stone houses were blown down in a row on the sea front, the whole of the new exhibition building at Buenos Ayres was destroyed, and, among the many other accidents to the shipping, a large barque, at anchor off Montevideo with all canvas stowed, was capsized by the first gust.

But we must now return to the *Falcon*, which was riding all this out in great peril of being utterly lost, either by foundering or collision with the numerous craft that had parted their chains, and were driving helplessly on shore. Lucky it was for us that this first cyclonic squall only lasted about half an hour, when the wind settled down to a comparatively gentle, strong south-westerly gale.

We now found ourselves in a most dangerous position. We had anchored near several of the heavy, iron-ribbed lighters which are used to discharge the cargoes from vessels in the outer roads. These were all much larger craft than the *Falcon*. Now it happened during the cyclone that, in consequence of some, or, as is more probable, all, of us having dragged our anchors, we had collected together into a dense group, and collisions were frequent between different

craft as they rose and fell on the heavy seas. To collide with one of these tough monsters probably meant destruction to the lighter and more delicate yacht. One did come foul of us, and carried away the greater part of our starboard rail and the stanchions of the hand-rope, but luckily inflicted no serious damage. Then she tried to come on the top of us, and bringing her bowsprit down on our decks, snapped it off short. Before any serious damage had come about, I had sent Panissa on board of her to pay out her chain. This he managed to do, and so she fell away clear of us. The wretched Panissa, however, found it impossible to climb back to the *Falcon* again, so he had to remain wet and blanketless on the deserted lighter until the weather moderated on the following day, and we were enabled to lower a boat to take him off.

But we now observed a far more serious cause of danger just astern of us. We had dragged right under the iron bows of another larger and also deserted lighter. Her bowsprit was not a yard from our bows. As a great wave passed under us and raised her, she seemed to be right over us and about to fall and inevitably cut us down and sink us. I sent a man on board of her, but he could give her no further scope of chain. We could not move from our own position without certainly fouling some lighter, so all we could do was to hope for the best, and wait. We were certainly in a position of great danger. We all knew that if the *Falcon* dragged her anchors but six feet more, she would without fail be cut down and sunk. All through that stormy night and the next day we watched with straining eyes that cruel-

looking, iron-bound bow rising and falling behind us, expecting in each fiercer gust of the storm, or after some higher wave than usual, to hear the dull thud and the sound of crushing timbers.

I think that the most speculative of underwriters would have refused to have anything to do with the *Falcon's* insurance, had he seen her then. The poor old vessel's life was not worth much, so little that the men collected their watches and such valuables about them, in expectation of our vessel sinking beneath our feet at any moment. But the old *Falcon* was not yet to die; she had dragged so far, but having got as near danger as she conveniently could, she stopped, and did not go astern another inch all through the pampero. Our escape certainly seemed miraculous, and had the good effect of inspiring my Italians with a profound faith in the luck of the vessel.

Nearly a week went by before our repairs were effected, for during that time a nasty sea was nearly constantly running in the harbour, which rendered carpenter's work difficult on board; besides, the Italian ship-carpenter we had engaged invariably got seasick when our vessel rolled about to any extent. But at last the little craft was once more ready for sea. All her stores were on board—tinned meats, rum, and water for four months; a large cask of eggs, preserved in lime-water, on deck; and an abundance of vegetables. All the standing and running rigging had been carefully overhauled, and replaced where necessary.

On the 15th of November I got a clean bill of health for Pernambuco, brought the chronometers on board, and gave orders for sailing that evening.

All hands were then employed in securing everything on deck and below, lashing the boat bottom upwards on the deck, and so on. The weather was glorious, with every prospect of it remaining so, and we sailed out of the harbour at seven in the evening in grand style, with spinnaker and top-sail set. We saluted the English gun-boats as we passed them; then, having got outside the bay, found that we had a light wind right aft to help us up the coast. All seemed in our favour, and we entertained hopes of being rapidly carried into the calm tropic seas out of this stormy region, for a pampero was not a phenomenon we at all desired to encounter out at sea; we had seen quite enough of the fury of this wind in port.

No sooner were we well outside the harbour than the mate came up to me, and asked me if I had any objection to the voyage being inaugurated according to the usual custom on Genoese vessels. On hearing what this ceremony consisted of, I at once assented. He called the hands aft, made a little speech in Genoese, in which he exhorted them to do their duty, be obedient and respectful to the captain, and so forth. Then a glass of rum was served to each, the prosperity of the voyage drunk, and the watches formally set.

The voyage that was now before us was to be a far longer one than any we had yet undertaken during our cruise. Not that the direct distance to our next port, Bahia, at which I purposed calling on my way to Pernambuco, was great. From Montevideo to the Bay of All Saints is, roughly, 1800 nautical miles. But we anticipated a head-

wind all the way ; and a dead beat of 1800 miles against a confused and choppy sea, not to mention a contrary current, is somewhat of an undertaking.

The south-east trade-wind does not blow home to the Brazilian coast, but, at the distance of several hundred miles from it, is deflected in its course, and pursues a direction nearly parallel to the land. For one half the year this wind blows *down* the coast for the other half *up* it. These seasons are known as those of the northerly and southerly Brazilian monsoons, a misnomer, as any one who reads the definition of monsoon in any physical geography can see for himself.

Now we left Montevideo in the middle of the northerly monsoon, when that wind blows boisterously from the north-east, accompanied by heavy rains and frequent squalls, so we anticipated a long period of uncomfortable tossing about, with a good deal of water tumbling over our bows at times ; nor were we disappointed.

It is the rule for vessels bound north from the River Plate and South Brazilian ports, during the prevalence of this unfavourable monsoon, to sail some 700 miles to the eastward, or even considerably to the south of east, close-hauled on the port tack, before they go about and make their northering, and, with all this offing, it is not unusual for a clumsy craft to fail to weather Cape San Roque, that bugbear of South Atlantic mariners.

But with a fore-and-after like ours, that could sail a little over four points off the wind, such precautions were unnecessary ; we would make eastering when the wind was favourable for so doing, and go about



whenever a shift of wind rendered the other tack the most advantageous.

By making use of every turn of the unsteady, ever-varying monsoon, we made a fairly smart passage. A large barque left Montevideo the same day as ourselves. We both arrived at Bahia on the same day after a voyage of thirty-eight days ; but, whereas we sailed considerably out of our course in order to visit the desert island of Trinidad, and there remained at anchor for nine days, I think we can fairly boast of having given that barque a very undeniable beating. The distance to Bahia is, as I have said, about 1800 miles, but with our rather zigzag course and trip to Trinidad, we made over 3000 miles of it.

We passed Flores' light at about eleven on the night of our departure. Then the wind fell away, and but light puffs occasionally filled our spinnaker as we drifted on slowly before the easterly set of the River Plate.

On the following morning a five-knot breeze sprang up from the west, before which we scudded east under all canvas. We passed by Lobos Island and Maldonado Bay, and at sunset perceived Cape Santa Maria to the W.N.W., from which we took our departure.

On relieving the watch at eight o'clock of our third morning out, I found we were out of sight of land and in blue water once more. The wind had now veered to the quarter from which it was to be expected, north-east, so sailing full and by on the port tack we were enabled to steer about east.

This wind gradually freshened, a confused sea rose, and the sky became obscured by heavy banks of clouds. This weather lasted for the next three days,

and very uncomfortable it was. The *Falcon* continually pitched her nose into the short choppy seas, taking more water on board each time than during the whole outward voyage. She laboured a good deal at times, and we found it necessary to relieve her by taking two reefs in the main-sail and shifting the first for the storm-jib. All our clothing was wet through during this time, as indeed it generally was for a month afterwards, while we battled with the north-east monsoon, our paraffine-stove being, of course, not capable of doing much in the way of drying ; we had to wait for the rare sun to do that.

By this time I had been able to come to a fairly just estimate of my Genoese crew. On the whole I was satisfied with them. With the exception of Panissa they were up to their work, and very willing to do it ; but they were not of over-cleanly habits. I often used to give the mate lectures on this subject, describe to him the fastidious order and cleanliness which distinguish an English yacht, and picture to him the horror with which our slovenly vessel would be regarded in an English yachting harbour, such as Cowes. But it was of no use ; I could not overcome the nature of these mariners. An Italian considers dirt as a comfortable sort of thing ; as long as everything is fairly shipshape for practical purposes of seamanship, he is content ; he looks upon tidiness and the removal of filth as foolish waste of time. After vain attempts to bring my Genoese over to my views, I had to give in for the sake of peace, and contented myself with merely insisting on an approximate cleanliness while in port.

Our cook, Paulo Ciarlo, a very worthy fellow, was

much puzzled at first with the paraffine-stove and the tinned meats, but he soon fell into *Falcon* ways, and ingeniously managed to evolve a very fair *cuisine à l'Italienne* out of the preserved meats of Australia. This Paulo Ciarlo was a great fisherman; he would contrive all sorts of quaint machines wherewith to tempt the finny dwellers of the deep. He made one most diabolical-looking apparatus, a sort of wooden egg bristling with spikes an inch and more long. With this he caught polypi, a great luxury to Italians, though I cannot say I appreciate them myself. But we caught better fish than these—palomitas, dolphins, and king-fish, which latter may be defined as giant deep-sea mackerel.

From a small vessel like ours many more fish can be caught than from a faster-sailing vessel. Indeed, during our homeward voyage we were never without fresh fish on board, for the tropical seas of Brazil abound in life. The dolphins were our favourites, and we often caught fine fellows, weighing fifty or sixty pounds. We always towed a stout twenty-fathom line behind us with a large hook, baited, as a rule, with a scrap of white rag merely, unless we had a flying-fish to put on; for this is the greatest temptation one can offer to a dolphin. We found a speed of about four knots the most favourable for our deep-sea fishing.

As soon as some big dolphin or king-fish took the bait, there would be great excitement on board. The steersman would shove his tiller hard down, and the vessel would fly up in the wind with all sails flapping, even the spinnaker would be taken aback at times. The way of the vessel thus checked, that arch-fisher-

man, the cook, who always rushed on deck as soon as he heard the cry of "a fish," would haul in the line with a face distorted with excitement, till the monster would be right under our stern, darting about hither and thither in frantic terror. Then another hand, who was standing ready with grain or harpoon in hand on the taffrail, would deftly throw it, and, in another moment, a beautiful sixty-pound dolphin, all purple and gold, would be flying about our decks, beating it with its powerful tail with blows that sounded like a heavy hammer. Then the cook would exult and chuckle, and draw his long knife, to prepare the beautiful creature for culinary purposes. When a fish escaped from our hooks, the anguish with which he would stamp about the decks, and the fluency of his swearing, were fearful to see and hear.

## CHAPTER XIII.

ON our sixth day out, Sunday, the 20th of November, the north-east wind fell away, and we were left rolling about in a calm, under an overcast sky from which a constant drizzle descended. We were about 340 miles from the nearest land, but did not know our exact position, as the weather had prevented our taking an observation of the sun for three days. The barometer had fallen rather suddenly a tenth and a half, but there were no indications of bad weather in the heavens. However, the River Plate pampero is not wont to give much forewarning of this kind, and often comes on with such suddenness, that the sails can scarce be taken off a vessel before she is in the midst of the furious hurricane.

The glass did not fall for nothing this day. At midday the sky cleared, a light north-east wind sprang up. It was the finest imaginable weather, and a tempest seemed a very remote contingency; but at 12.30 there rose suddenly from the southern horizon into the clear blue sky, an inky mass of cloud that spread over the heavens, and advanced towards us with tremendous rapidity. It was a most ominous appearance. There arose a great bustle at once on

board the yacht. We lowered all our canvas on deck, stowed the main-sail as closely as possible, and lashed the boom firmly amidships.

On board a full-rigged ship, that was about a mile to windward of us, the crew were taking in canvas as rapidly as possible.

We made all snug, then waited to see what was coming ; and not long had we to wait. The mass of cloud was over our heads, and in another moment had covered all the heavens. For the first few minutes there was no wind, but a fearful downpour of rain—bucketfuls of it—almost literally. The conflict between the opposing southerly and north-easterly winds caused a dead calm by us. Then the storm-wind gained the day, drove back the feeble monsoon, and we were scudding rapidly before a heavy south-easterly gale. We put the storm-trysail—a jib-headed one—on the little ship, and the storm-jib, under which canvas she behaved very well. But here let me remark, that every small fore-and-after that is bound for a lengthy ocean cruise should carry a small square-sail of stout canvas for running before strong gales. I much regretted not having provided myself with this sail. Under such a square-sail the little craft can run dead before the wind and waves without any fear of jibing.

During the afternoon the wind came round from the south-east to the south-west, as is the custom of the pampero, and increased much in violence. The sea, too, rose very suddenly, and some of the waves that followed us looked so formidable that I regretted not having hove the vessel to with the floating-anchor out. This would have been the more prudent

measure, but now it would have been dangerous to have attempted to bring her up to the wind with such a sea running.

It was not a true sea, either, that was following us, for the waves not only came up behind us before the south-west wind, but occasionally a nasty cross sea from the south-east would worry us, which we had to meet with the helm, so as to avoid taking these dangerous waves broadside on.

The *Falcon* behaved wonderfully well in this the heaviest weather I have ever seen her in. Giant billows, with overhanging, breaking crests, came rolling on us, looking as if they must inevitably overwhelm the vessel ; but she would toss up her heels as they approached, and they would thunder by without sending much water on her decks. This was a severe test for her seaworthiness, and she certainly did not belie her old reputation of the English Channel.

During the night, which was very dark, steering was anxious, for it was difficult for the helmsman to perceive in time, and bear away from, the cross seas that came up steeper and higher than ever, at intervals of about ten minutes. During my watches this night I had to do more than my proper share of steering, for the boy, Arthur Cotton, had managed to steal some rum from the barrel below, and had brought himself into a condition of the most helpless drunkenness, to console himself for the bad weather. So he passed the night snoring loudly under the boat on deck. He had to make up these arrears of steering with interest afterwards, and was deprived of sundry luxuries for some time to come.

Throughout the next day, the 21st of November, the gale blew with increased violence. The sea, too, was higher ; we shipped a good deal of water over our quarter at times, as we rolled about in the confused seas which came up from the south-west and south-east alternately, so that the vessel required very careful steering. Panissa proved himself so bad a helmsman, that we found we could not trust him at the tiller at all, so he enjoyed a holiday throughout the remainder of the pampero.

It is generally observed that during a prolonged gale two or four rollers, far higher than any others, occur at long intervals, say of twelve hours, and it is no doubt, as a rule, one of such exceptionally lofty and breaking seas that overwhelms a vessel and causes her to founder.

At four o'clock this afternoon two such gigantic billows came right astern. I was steering at the time ; the cook, who was on deck, suddenly cried out, "Caramba, qué marecada !" and looking over my shoulder I perceived a huge wave of green water, with an ugly, over-curling, breaking crest, rapidly overtaking us. It seemed that it must of a certainty fall on us, and that it was quite impossible for the *Falcon* to rise to such a steep wall of water ; that she would be rolled over and over by it certainly seemed probable to me at that moment.

I observed, however, that the wave was not breaking just at the portion where it would strike us, though it broke heavily at either side. I only took a second's glance, jammed myself firmly inside the tiller-rope, and steered so that the wave should strike us dead aft. Suddenly up went our stern with a jerk that jumped



me off my feet, a few bucketfuls of water tumbled on board, then up flew our bow, till our deck was at an angle of  $45^{\circ}$ . The roller had passed us ; it had struck us so true that we remained on an even keel without the slightest list to port or starboard.

But the peril was far from over yet ; another equally lofty roller followed close, and between the two was a valley so narrow and steep that it was impossible that the *Falcon* after her descent could raise her stern in time to meet this second wall of water.

After a glance over my shoulder, which sufficed me to take in the danger of the situation, I turned my back on the roller again, and kept the vessel dead before it. We slid down the slope of the liquid valley, then our stern commenced to rise a little as the foot of the second wave reached us, and then there was a crash and a sudden darkness, and I felt a mass of water rush right over my head.

"It is all up with us," I thought, that is if I thought at all, for all this had occupied but a few seconds ; I think, however, all on board imagined that we had foundered ; doubtlessly, to any one looking from above, the masts of the vessel would at that moment alone have been visible, the whole hull must have been submerged. But the *Falcon* was strong, the mass of water had not broken through her decks ; just as she had met the first wave she met this, not the least on one quarter or the other, so we escaped broaching to—a probable occurrence in the presence of such monster waves, and one that would of course have ensured our loss.

In another second, as I opened my eyes after the stunning effect of the deluge of water, I saw the

bulwarks rise above the sea, then the little vessel gave herself a sort of shake of relief and the water soon poured out through her scuppers, this being facilitated by the comparatively calm sea that always succeeds to exceptionally high waves.

The cook, I observed, had held on tightly, and had not been washed overboard ; he commenced to compliment me on my steering, which he said had saved us. Then the companion hatch slid back, and the mate and Panissa came up, with faces very pallid ; when they heard the shock of the mass of water on deck, they said they distinctly felt the vessel go down, and were sure she was foundering.

This was the only occasion during the cruise in which we were in serious peril. Had we taken the first roller on board, the second falling on us as we lay deadened and stunned, with our decks full of water, would certainly have sent us down.

During the second night of the gale steering was more anxious work than ever, for it was too dark to distinguish the perilous cross seas. It is no easy work on a black night to luff or bear away continually to two seas coming up at right angles to each other.

But about midnight there came a change in the weather that was in a way favourable to us. The south-west gale continued, but at frequent intervals south-east squalls of great violence, accompanied by heavy rain, would drive across the sea ; these blew off the tops of the waves into blinding sheets of spray, so that we could distinguish nothing, but so furious were they that they soon also blew down the high and breaking seas, and converted the ocean into

a confused mass of short, choppy, foaming waves of little height, and in no way dangerous. We had to bear away and run before these squalls when they struck us.

The south-wester now gradually moderated, and veered round to the south, then by the morning of the 22nd of November to the south-east. It was squally and rough still, but the gale had evidently broken, and the glass was rising steadily.

I managed to get an observation of the sun, and found our position to be lat.  $31^{\circ} 58'$  S., long.  $43^{\circ} 57'$  W., we had therefore run about 300 miles in a north-east direction, before the pampero, that is, nearly parallel to the coast.

At midday we got into a calmer sea, and the wind being now about east we steered north-east, sailing full and by on the starboard tack. The sky was now cloudless, so contentment and joy filled our souls at the contrast between this delicious weather and the recent storm. Our decks presented a very agreeable appearance, and a somewhat picturesque one—a scene of idyllic repose, if the term is applicable to a sea-scape.

The vessel was sailing her five knots through the dark-blue water, throwing up two wings of silver spray on either bow. Italian garments, more or less ragged, and of rich colours, festooned the rigging, to dry in the warm sunshine. All hands were basking on deck in their several fashions. The cook lying on the upturned boat eagerly scanning his fishing-line that was dragging aft, his whole soul in his favourite sport; the mate mending a pair of pantaloons under the bulwark; Panissa, looking sentimental the while,

was sitting on the hatch playing Spanish airs and selections from Italian operas on his accordion.

The captain lay on his back on deck in the sun, drying, smoking, and contemplating the sky, a volume of Balzac by his side. The boy, stubborn and stern and silent, was steering, making up arrears, a suspicious lump in his cheek betokening a quid, a luxury the young rascal was over addicted to.

But we were not long to enjoy this pleasant *dolce far niente* in the sunshine, for by night the wind had got round to the north-east again, and an uncomfortable fortnight was before us of wearisome beating up against the squally, rainy monsoon across a leaden-coloured sea under a sunless sky.

We had now got an offing of about 350 miles, but I wished to increase this distance considerably if possible, for further to the eastward we should probably encounter south-easterly winds.

In latitude  $20^{\circ} 30'$  south, and some 700 miles from the Brazilian coast, is situated the group of desert islands known as the Trinidad and Martin Vas. Of these Trinidad is a fair-sized island, about fifteen English miles in circumference, with lofty, rugged mountains; as our course was likely to bring us somewhere in its vicinity, I thought it would be quite worth our while to effect a landing and explore it if possible.

The description of this islet in the "South Atlantic Directory" was certainly tempting, though hinting at dangers, and there were held out to us in this work promises of good fishing around its coasts, and sport among the hogs and goats in its ravines, not to mention turtles, green food, wreckage, and other attrac-

tions. The following is taken from the description in the above-mentioned work.

"Trinidad is surrounded by sharp, rugged coral rocks, with an almost continual surge breaking on every part, which renders landing often precarious, and watering frequently impracticable, nor is there a possibility of rendering either certain, for the surf is often incredibly great, and has been seen during a gale at S.W., to break over a bluff which is 200 feet high.

"Captain Edmund Halley, afterwards Dr. Halley, Astronomer Royal, landed on this island, the 17th of April, 1700, and put on it some goats and hogs, and also a pair of guinea fowl, which he carried from St. Helena. 'I took,' says his journal, 'possession of the island in his majesty's name, as knowing it to be granted by the king's letters patent, leaving the Union Jack flying.'

"When the English went to Trinidad in 1781, in order to ascertain whether a settlement was practicable there, they did not find it answer their expectations.

"The American commander, Amaso Delano, visited Trinidad in 1803, and he, again, describes it as mostly a barren, rough pile of rocky mountains. What soil there is on the island he found on the eastern side, where are several sand-beaches, above one of which the Portuguese *had* a settlement.

"This settlement was directly above the most northerly sand-beach on the east side of the island, and has the best stream of water on the island running through it.

"Delano got his water off the south side of the

island. Here a stream falls in a cascade over rocks some way up the mountains, so that it can be seen from a boat when passing it. After you have discovered the stream, you can land on a point of rocks just to the westward of the watering-place, and from thence may walk past it, and when a little to the eastward, there is a small cove among the rocks where you may float your casks off. Wood may be cut on the mountain just above the first landing-place, and you may take it off if you have a small oak boat.

"All the south side of the island is indented with small bays; but the whole is so iron-bound a coast and such a swell surging against it, that it is almost impossible to land a boat without great danger of staving it. The south part is a very remarkable, high, square bluff-head, and is very large. There is a sand-beach to the westward of this head, but I should caution against landing on this beach; for just at the lower edge of it, and amongst the breakers, it is full of rocks, which are not seen till you are amongst them.

"If a ship is very much in need of wood or water, it may be got at Trinidad; or if the crew should have the scurvy, it is an excellent place to recruit them in, as you can get plenty of greens on the south-east part, such as fine purslain.

"We [Delano] found plenty of goats and hogs—the latter were very shy, but we killed some of them and a number of goats; we also saw some cats."

When my men heard of my intention of sailing to this lone island of the South Atlantic, they expressed great delight, especially when they learnt that pigs

and goats were reported to be its sole inhabitants. On this, the 23rd of November, being our ninth day out, Trinidad was about 1000 miles to the north-east of us.

And now we had a troublesome time of it, the wind was ever varying. Now we lay up to the north-east on the starboard tack, now could only fetch up to the east or even south-east. We were often going about, and sometimes were considerably puzzled on which tack to put the vessel, both being bad; the one taking us to the south of east—a retrograde direction—the other towards the land which we wished to avoid.

The weather, too, was abominable, the rain was almost constant, and heavy squalls very frequent, so that we had often to lower our main-sail on deck till they had passed by. A very nasty choppy sea, too, was perpetually running, which deadened our way considerably, and kept us constantly wet. We did not average 100 miles a day. For two nights we had to heave the vessel to, so heavily was she labouring.

The poor cook was in great trouble all this while, for cooking was attended with decided difficulties. Now and then, especially when the lubberly Panissa was steering, a sea would come over the bows, find its way down the chimney, extinguish the stove, and spoil the polenta or savoury dolphin-stew. Then would the forecastle man-hole cover be shoved aside, and above the deck would appear the cook's ferocious face and gaunt tattooed arm, which latter he would shake menacingly at the guilty helmsman, while he thundered out sonorous Italian oaths on his head, until another green sea came on board and quenched his ire; whereupon he would disappear suddenly,

and the hatch would close over him as on a Jack-in-the-box. Poor cook! he had many troubles, not least among which were the cockroaches which swarmed in millions on the *Falcon* since her visit to Paraguay; these would devour all the vegetables and the dried fish; indeed, nothing came amiss to them; they supped one night on Panissa's kid boots—for that mariner, like many Italian sailors, possessed a shore-going pair of high-heeled French kid boots! They honeycombed all our biscuits, our soup always came on the table thickened with these filthy insects, so that we had to skim it carefully before eating. They were everywhere, and not to be avoided; to exterminate them we should have had to take everything out of the vessel. But the cook consoled himself for present ills with the anticipation of future bliss, for he was wont to picture to himself all manner of wonderful fun he was going to have at Trinidad, how he would salt down tons of fish and turtles, cure bacon, collect birds' eggs. It was arranged that he should go on shore at daylight each day to milk the goats for our morning coffee. He was pleased and excited at the prospect, and volunteered to accompany me on a thorough voyage of exploration among these untrodden volcanic crags, for he had in his blood some of the adventurous spirit of his fellow-citizen Columbus.

On looking over my log for this voyage, I find the same constantly-recurring entries of the following dreary nature:—"Constant rain"—"Four violent squalls in succession"—"Still battened down"—"Ship taking much water over her bows."

We had, indeed, a most uncomfortable time of it.



I believe, during this fortnight, the *Falcon* jumped about more and shipped more water than during all her previous existence. To be constantly battered down was highly unpleasant, especially as we advanced northward into warmer weather. Although the sky was ever clouded, and pouring down almost unrelenting rain on us, the temperature was high, 75° to 80°. The sea, too, was of about the same temperature, and felt like hot water as it washed over us, for we were sailing against the warm equatorial current that flows down the coast of Brazil at the rate of twenty miles a day. The atmosphere in the cabin was horribly close, and after a few hours' sleep below, one invariably awoke with a headache. This was not to be wondered at, for ventilation of course there was none, and the stove poisoned us with carbonic acid gas.

The compound odour, too, was quite indescribable. The strings of garlic and onions that festooned the forecastle, the reeking garments of the crew, the foul smell of cockroaches, could be too easily distinguished; but there were other subtle and pungent smells besides, that defied analysis.

How we damp wretches looked forward to the time when we should be running with easy motion again before the soft trades under sunny skies, instead of this perpetual jumping into the steep seas, with shock and sound, as if the vessel was striking a rock, till one's head swam round with the dizziness of the irregular leaping and fallings. The health of the crew was affected by this unwholesome tepid weather; the constant exposure to the humidity, not of the sea only, but of rains and soaking dews, brought on

rheumatism, and a great languor and debility. Our sleep was heavy and unrefreshing. We woke with big, aching heads, and pains in the eyes and neck. Some of the symptoms, such as the sense of debility, I was inclined to attribute in the case of the crew to the fact of their constantly wearing their oilskins. In warm weather like this no practice could be more unwholesome. I myself was suffering from a recurrence of old malarial symptoms, and the cook from ophthalmia.

And so we thrashed up against the monsoon, as a rule close hauled on the starboard tack, but occasionally on the other when the wind favoured it, until the 27th of November, our thirteenth day out, when our position at midday was latitude  $24^{\circ} 53'$  S., our longitude  $39^{\circ} 57'$  W. We were thus distant but 160 miles from Cape Frio.

On the following day Cape St. Thome bore 118 miles to the north-west by west. We had crossed Capricorn, and were once more in the tropics.

We were now so much to leeward of Trinidad, which was 568 miles to the E.N.E., that I determined to abandon the projected visit to the desert island, and sail direct for Bahia, which bore 600 miles to the north of us. But I consoled the cook with a promise that we should anchor a few days among the Abrolhos rocks, which lay on our course. The waters round these are reported to abound with fish.

The wind now became more variable and gusty than ever, sometimes it blew from the north, sometimes from the south of east, and for several days we beat up against a very confused and troublesome sea.

On the 2nd of December Trinidad lay 370 miles to the east by north of us, the Abrolhos rocks 220 miles to the north-west.

On the 3rd of December the weather cleared to our great delight, and the sun made its appearance, so we were enabled to hang out our drenched garments to dry. Everything, even to our bedding, had been wet through for three weeks. Our rigging now presented a goodly show of gaudy-coloured rags, blankets, and oils, fluttering in the wind, suggesting reminiscences of Ratcliffe Highway slopshops.

On the 4th of December the wind chopped round to the N.N.W., and blew hard right in our teeth, if we continued our course to Bahia; but it was fair for Trinidad, now only 200 miles distant to the E.S.E. It looked, too, as if it would last, so after inspecting the chart, and thinking the matter over, I determined to alter our course once more, and run for Trinidad. I came on deck, and gave instructions to this effect to the mate. The men were delighted at the welcome news, and eased off sheets, and got the spinnaker on with great alacrity.

Delightful to us was the easy motion of our vessel, now running before wind and sea after all our tacking. But this pleasant state of things was not to last long. The *Falcon* seemed to be a very *Flying Dutchman*, for whichever way we altered our course, the wind would turn round and head us. At ten p.m. the wind quite suddenly came round to the E.N.E. again, taking our sails aback, so we had to take in spinnaker, trim sheets, and put her close-hauled on the port tack. Later on the wind got round to the E.S.E., that is dead in our teeth.

The mate suggested wearing round, and running for Bahia ; but I would not alter my plans again, and determined now to sail to Trinidad, however long it took us to get there. Besides, if we were to alter our destination with each change of the fickle monsoon, we should be ever going backwards and forwards across this dreary bit of the ocean, and never fetch anywhere.

On the morning of the 6th of December the wind got round again to the N.N.E., so we were able to lay up for our island with flowing sheets. At midday Trinidad was 112 miles to the E.S.E. of us, so the cook, wild with eager anticipation, overhauled his apparati of destruction, and got everything in readiness, fishing-lines, harpoons, casks for preserving pork and goat-flesh in, and so on.

The 7th of December was a calm, cloudless day, and hot. At eight a.m. we were about forty-six miles from Trinidad, at which distance its lofty mountains should be visible in clear weather.

As the sun rose higher we perceived to the south-east, in which direction we expected to discover the island, a bank of cloud on the horizon. We knew that the lonely rock of ocean lay in the midst of this, for all such lofty and isolated islands attract to them masses of clouds. The multitudes of fish, too, that swam around our vessel were a sure indication of the vicinity of land. At eleven a.m. this vapour lifted somewhat, and we distinguished the whole rugged form of the iron-bound island, its pyramidal summits being capped by clouds.

But the ill-fate of Vanderdecken seemed still to attend us, for the wind, that though light had been

fair, fell away. We had been allowed to catch a glimpse only of our much-desired port, when heavy banks of clouds rose from the south-east horizon with ominous rapidity, and scarce had we time to take in our spinnaker, and reef our main-sail, before the squall was on us, blowing right in our teeth from the direction of the island, and accompanied by a regular tropical downpour of rain. The whole heavens were now covered with rolling vapour, and of course the island became invisible to us.

The south-east wind blew throughout the rest of the day, and a steady drizzle set in that promised to last some time, but taking short boards we sailed on against wind and rain undiscouraged, for we were so near to our destination that we now could afford to laugh at the foul weather. Already we smelt the smell of the roast pigs, and our mouths were watering at the thought of the delectable crisp crackling thereof.

At night the sky cleared, and in the bright moonlight we once more perceived Trinidad standing out black and distinct with rugged outline before the blue starlit sky, one solitary white cloud crowning its highest peak. The wind blew steadily from the south-east. This is the prevailing wind off Trinidad, for the island lies outside the region of the Brazilian monsoon, and within the zone of the south-east trades.

## CHAPTER XIV.

AT daybreak of the 8th of December we were becalmed under the lee of the island, about three miles from the beach, upon which we could hear the sea break furiously. Trinidad certainly appeared a wild and uninviting spot, a precipitous mass of barren volcanic rock, with lofty inaccessible summits, the whole surface being studded with sharp needle-like peaks.

We got out sweeps, and with their aid slowly approached the south-west corner of the island. I recognized many of the landmarks that previous navigators had described; the huge Monument—the Sugar-loaf and others—and on opening the south-west bay I perceived a considerable issue of water leaping down a rugged, barren ravine in a series of cascades into the sea. This I soon concluded must be the one described in the Directory, and I determined to come to an anchor off it.

After having got our chain and anchor up from the hold, I sent the mate out in the boat to take soundings, and choose a suitable anchorage. He returned at midday, and reported that he had found bottom—coral, and broken shells—in eighteen fathoms, at

about half a mile from the shore. Further in he said there were many dangerous rocks.

It was now a dead calm, so we towed the vessel towards the bay with our boat. As there was a slight current against us, this was pretty hard work, under the rays of a vertical sun. At 2.30 p.m. we came to an anchor off the cascade, the south-west point of the island bearing south-east, and Bird Island, N.N.W. Bird Island, so named by us, is a rock of considerable size, peopled by thousands of sea-birds, that lies off the north point of South-west Bay.

Glad we were to hear our chain rattle out once more, even though in an open roadstead in mid-ocean, off a small desert island, after our weary twenty-four days of battling with the rainy monsoon.

Having made all snug, I decided to dine first, and then search for a landing-place in the boat. It did not look much like landing at all from our deck or masthead, for the great smooth ocean swell in which the *Falcon* now rose and fell so gently, broke heavily on the coral-fringed shore. There seemed to be one unbroken line of great breakers even on this the lee side of the island, and the roar of them reverberated among the rocky ravines like loud thunder, that did not sound encouraging to the explorers.

We enjoyed a very varied fish dinner, for the cook had not been idle with his lines. I was aware that the sea round any desert isle rarely visited by man and far distant from any main, always teemed with fish, but I had no idea that any portion of ocean ever swarmed with life to such a marvellous extent as is the case round this islet.

There was a species of black pig-fish, as the Italians

call them, that surrounded us in vast shoals, so dense that the clear water presented an unbroken inky appearance in every direction for a time. There was another species of pig-fish, too, that was beautifully striped with broad bands of violet ; there were fish of every colour of the rainbow, of every size and shape.

"Too much fish, Mistare Niti!" exclaimed the cook, who gazed with an amazement almost mixed with fear at this more than realization of his very wildest piscatorial dreams. He rubbed his eyes and cried, "Is it not a vision ? but I will try." And he forthwith cast his lines, and no sooner did the hook touch the water than hundreds of fish were at it, and the chief, indeed only, skill required by the fisherman, was to haul the line quickly back before the secured prey was devoured by his cannibal brethren.

There were eight distinct varieties of fish, and all edible, crowding the waters around our hull, and none were timid and shy, for what knew they of the insidious hooks that lay buried in the tempting morsels that these strange monsters that had visited their island for the first time were so kindly throwing to them ?

But now sharks, perceiving the unwonted commotion and large crowd of smaller fry that was collected round us, came up to discover what was going on. At one time there were quite thirty of these ugly monsters swimming round us. The other fish dispersed as they approached, and only the very greedy ones remained. The sharks spoilt our fishing somewhat during our stay off Trinidad ; but not much, there was enough for all. What we chiefly objected to was their habit of biting some fine fish off our hooks



before we could get him on board ; but Mr. Shark got caught himself several times in consequence of this unneighbourly practice, and even before our dinner this day we had hooked and slain four fair-sized sea-lawyers.

After dinner I pulled off in the boat with the mate and Panissa to discover a landing-place, taking a musket and some fishing-lines with me. On approaching the shore we found it run steep down, so that the sea only broke when it reached it, there not being two or three lines of breakers as is the case on gently shelving coasts. But though we rowed along the line of surf for some distance, we could nowhere perceive any spot on which a boat could be beached without running a great risk—indeed, certainty, would be the proper word—of getting her stove in. There was but a narrow verge of beach between the cliffs and the breakers, and this was composed of sharp coral rocks and huge boulders fallen from the mountains ; there were no sandy or pebbly beaches.

We could examine the shore very close, for the sea broke always so exactly in the same spot that we were enabled to keep the boat on the summit of a wave just before it was about to break, and look down on the beach below us.

We rowed under the Monument, which is a four-sided column of basaltic formation,—quite 800 feet high, I should say,—separated from the cliff by a wide opening. We passed between Bird Island and the mainland, and pulled on for an hour to the northward, but everywhere the sea broke furiously on an iron-bound coast. We observed that little rivulets fell in cascades down every defile in the mountains,

so of fresh water there was evidently an abundance on the island.

We could perceive no vegetation on the beach or on the lower slopes of the mountains, which were either precipitous or steep inclines of loose rocks and stones of every shape and size. But we noticed that there were plateaus and great domes at the summit of these hills, which were covered with a bright green grass or other herb, and, in places, forests of some sort of tree.

Amazed as we had been at the quantity of fish that swarmed in these waters, we were still more so when we perceived the myriads of sea-fowl of various species that covered this island. Seen at a distance many of the cliffs appeared white, as if of chalk, with the multitude of the snowy-plumaged birds that were perched on their honey-combed surface. Bold as had been the fish, these birds were more so. Hundreds of kittiwakes and certain great fluffy, hoarse-voiced fowl, whose true name I am unacquainted with, came off their cliffs to inspect us; they flocked about our boat, and followed us as we coasted along, their number ever increasing. They kept up a continual chatter, no doubt discussing what we strange creatures could be, whether we were fish or birds, a new species of shark or albatross. They approached so near to us that we could knock them down with stretchers, and even catch them with our hands as they flew round our heads. But we saw no signs of any other life on the island, and commenced to entertain some doubts as to the existence of the pigs and goats. I think that after our experience with the fish and birds, we had half-expected to see these quadru-

peds flock down to the beach in battalions to welcome us to Trinidad.

We returned on board considerably disheartened at sunset, but were hungry and did justice to the cook's dinner of rock-cod and pig-fish. Failing land-pigs, that ardent disciple of Walton had caught "*too mucho fishi-porki*," to use his own words.

The next day was fine, but a fresh south-east wind had raised a considerable sea outside ; this caused a higher swell than usual to run into South-West Bay, so that the surf on the beach was more dangerous than it had been on the previous day.

After breakfast I rowed off with the mate and Panissa in the boat, with the intention of again attempting to effect a landing. I made for a spot that I had observed on the previous day, and which seemed to me then to be the best, if not the only, locality adapted for a boat landing-place ; this was a promontory of coral formation, that ran out into the sea some fifteen yards or more beyond the breakers. It was situated in South-West Bay, a short distance to the northward of the cascade. It was, indeed, a natural pier, for its sides ran perpendicularly down into deep water, and its summit was but six feet or so above the level of the sea. We got alongside of this, and the swell that passed by was so regular, though high, that it would have been easy to have approached close to, and when the boat was on the top of a wave, and so almost on a level with the summit of this coral jetty, for me to have leapt on shore without any danger, for the rough coral was not slippery.

But the mate was a very timid boatman, and Panissa a more timid one ; so after several attempts,

and some hard language, I had to abandon this method of landing ; for as soon as a wave approached these fellows would get frightened, and push off so far from the rock that leaping on it was quite out of the question.

I made them row along the coast far to the northward, and I observed that this portion of the island was far the most precipitous and inhospitable. At last we came to a cove, on to whose beach the sea broke dangerously at long intervals only ; for two precipitous capes that bounded it sheltered it considerably. We observed also that in one portion of the cove there were no sharp rocks to oppose our landing, the shore just there, which seemed to be of coral formation, was flat, and terminated seawards in a steep step. Here landing seemed to be feasible. Our method was as follows : We dropped our anchor some fifteen yards from the beach ; and then, choosing our opportunity, slacked out cable and backed stern on towards the shore. I stood up in the stern, ready to leap on to the beach as soon as the boat was near enough, leaving it to the mate to watch the sea, and choose a proper time between the breakers. As soon as I leapt on to the land he was to haul out again ; my provisions and rifle were to be passed to me by a line. So was it arranged ; but this is what occurred. I was standing up in the stern in readiness, with my face turned to the beach, when I heard a cry, and the next moment felt a mass of water strike me on the back, nearly pushing me overboard.

The clumsy mate had allowed a sea to break over our bows. It nearly filled our boat up ; she quivered, uncertain whether to turn turtle or not. The mate

seemed to be paralyzed by the accident, and not till I poked an oar into his stomach, to wake him up, had he sense to obey my orders and haul away at the line, so as to get beyond the limit of the breakers before the next was on us. By balancing the boat carefully we managed to keep her upright, and set to work to bale out as rapidly as possible. It was a near shave, and a nice mess we should have been in had we lost our boat, for she certainly would have been stove in had she been rolled over on these hard rocks by the powerful waves. It would not have been very prudent to have swum back to the *Falcon* through a sea swarming with sharks, and I had left no one on board who would have been capable of navigating her to the Brazilian coast, to purchase a boat with which to take us off. I saw I had committed a very imprudent act, so determined when I next attempted a landing to leave the mate on board the yacht, with definite instructions as to what to do in case of an accident occurring to the party on shore.

We returned on board in time for dinner; the mate and Panissa were more than discouraged by their morning's adventure. They suggested that we had better sail at once for Bahia, that landing on Trinidad was impossible, the attempting it a serious risk to life; besides, they urged, "we have been close to it: it is all a heap of stones; if we did land we should discover nothing worth the discovering." These arguments were just, but I did not like being beaten by Trinidad, and after sailing all this way I thought that we had hardly tried enough yet, and should not give in.

The cook was strongly of my opinion, and volun-

teered to accompany me on a voyage of discovery after dinner.

So we got under way once more at three p.m., taking with us a rifle, a bottle of rum, some biscuit, a tin of sardines, some tobacco, and of course fishing-lines. I arranged a series of signals by means of which I could communicate from the shore to the mate in case we lost the boat, one signal being an order to bring the yacht nearer to the shore, so that we could swim out to her; another, an order to sail to Bahia, purchase a boat, and return for us, this latter being in view of our finding abundant food on the island and finking the sharks.

This afternoon I examined the coast much more closely than I had done before, and knew that if landing was feasible, land we now should; for my companion was a thoroughly good boatman, and quite fearless, to boot. Paulo Ciarlo was ever ready for any wild adventure, and was a great contrast to the timid mate and cowardly Panissa.

Just to the northward of the Monument there is a promontory of precipitous rock, honeycombed and full of birds, on to which the sea breaks with fury. On the other side of this cape, and sheltered by it, is a bay hemmed in by barren mountains, steep, and seemingly inaccessible from the sea. There was little surf here, so we determined to land. To beach the boat we saw would be impossible, for the shore was encumbered with huge boulders of rock fallen from above. So we dropped our anchor far outside the breakers in about twenty feet of water, jumped overboard—there were no sharks so near the breakers—and swam to the shore.

We soon found ourselves standing on dry land once again, and rejoiced exceedingly. The next question was to get our stores on shore also. Now as the breakers were higher than they seemed to be from the boat, and the back undertow difficult to contend against, even for a strong swimmer, we simplified matters by carrying a line from the stern of the boat to the shore ; we hauled it taut and made it fast to an elevated rock. We found it quite easy to travel along this, hand over hand, through the water, with our baggage tied on to our heads. In two journeys we had brought all on shore. We put our property under a hollow rock, took a tot of rum each to counteract the dampness of our garments, lit our pipes, and proceeded to look around us. We wished to discover if it were possible to reach the rest of the island from this barren bay ; if it were so, I decided to return on board, and get some of the crew to land us here again on the morrow ; then they could take the boat away until our exploration was complete and we signalled for them to return to bring us off. We of course dared not leave the boat at anchor in this exposed spot for any time, for a westerly wind might spring up and bring a furious sea into the bay at very short notice.

The coast upon which we had landed was certainly an uninviting one. We could find no issue of water anywhere. The two precipitous capes that shut in the bay to the north and south put insurmountable obstacles to our progress in those directions, so we proceeded to scale the mountains to the back, to see if we could find an exit to a more fertile region.

In four different places in succession we attacked

the mountains, and four times were defeated, but not till we had attained a considerable elevation on each occasion.

The lower slopes were formed of *débris*, loose stones of every size, that the slightest touch dislodged, so even this portion of the ascent was not unattended with danger. Above these steep inclines of rolling stones was an almost precipitous wall, hundreds of feet in height, of basaltic formation, rising in shattered regular-shaped columns similar to those of the Giant's Causeway. So many were the inequalities of surface offered to the climber's foot, that to ascend this would not have seemed an alarming feat to any one with a good head, were he sure of his foothold.

But we soon found the mountain to be literally rotten. The columns were broken through at short intervals, and crumbled away when one grasped them. There was not one stone that was not loose and ready to topple down.

Thus, after struggling up to a much greater height than prudence should have sanctioned, for we had some narrow shaves, we were compelled to give in, weary and disappointed, and confess that we had landed in vain, having fallen on a cove from which there was no escape in any direction, surrounded by impassable cliffs.

As we discovered afterwards, this savage spot afforded a good specimen of the nature of the island. Utterly barren mountains rose from a coral beach, mountains that were rotten—and the whole island is so—burnt and shaken to pieces by the fires and earthquakes of volcanic action.

What struck us as remarkable was, that though in



this cove there was no live vegetation of any kind, there were traces of an abundant extinct vegetation. The mountain slopes were thickly covered with dead wood, wood, too, that had evidently long since been dead; some of these leafless trunks were prostrate, some still stood up as they had grown; many had evidently been trees of considerable size, bigger round than a man's body. They were rotten, brittle, and dry, and made glorious fuel. This wood was close grained, of a red colour, and much twisted. When we afterwards discovered that over the whole of this extensive island, from the beach up to the summit of the highest mountain—at the bottom and on the slopes of every now barren ravine, on whose loose rolling stones no vegetation could possibly take root—these dead trees were strewed as closely as is possible for trees to grow; and when we further perceived that they all seemed to have died at one and the same time, as if plague-struck, and that not one single live specimen young or old was to be found anywhere,—our amazement was increased.

At one time Trinidad must have been one magnificent forest, presenting to passing vessels a far different appearance to that it now does with its inhospitable and barren crags.

The descriptions given in the Directory allude to these forests; therefore, whatever catastrophe it may have been that killed off all the vegetation of the island, it must have occurred within the memory of man.

Looking at the rotten, broken-up condition of the rock, and the nature of the soil, where there is a soil—a loose powder, not consolidated like earth, but having

the appearance of fallen volcanic ash—I could not help imagining that some great eruption had brought about all this desolation ; Trinidad is the acknowledged centre of a small volcanic patch that lies in this portion of the South Atlantic, therefore I think this theory a more probable one than that of a long drought, a not very likely contingency in this rather rainy region.

As we could find no fresh water in our cove we saw that there was nothing left for us but to pack up our stores once more, swim off to our boat, and row back to the yacht. We felt very disinclined to undergo the exertion of all this. It was now dusk, and we had been toiling hard, rowing or climbing, all day under a fiery tropical sun, so we were pretty well fagged out ; our several duckings in our clothes, too, had assisted not a little to the exhaustion of our energies.

We should have preferred camping out where we were for the night, but without water this was impossible, for we were even now parched with thirst.

I had already packed up my bundle and was preparing to wade out into the breakers with no pleasant sensation, when a joyful cry burst from the cook, who was prowling about the shore in an inquisitive fashion.

“ Agua ! senior ; aqui hay agua ! ”

I dropped my bundle and hurried up to him ; he pointed to where, drop by drop, a crystal fluid was oozing from an overhanging rock, to be absorbed by the dry volcanic *débris* beneath. It was but little, but it was enough, and a quart bottle which we had brought with us filled, on being held under the tiny

issue, in about five minutes, with as cool pure water as any one could desire.

I tasted it, and then said, "Paulo, we will sleep here to-night."

"It is good, senor," he replied eagerly, for he was as tired as I was, and hence funk'd the plunge into the strong breakers as much as I did myself.

We now proceeded to make ourselves comfortable for the night. The overhanging rock under which we had placed our guns and stores on landing afforded us excellent shelter from a drizzling rain which had set in. We collected a large quantity of the dead wood, and soon had a glorious fire blazing at the mouth of our cavern, which quickly dried our sea-drenched garments.

Our dinner was a luxurious one, for we had an abundance of biscuit, a box of sardines, and a bottle of rum; besides these we had a few bright speckled sea-snakes we had found among the rocks, and some fine crabs, which when roasted we pronounced to be excellent. Thoroughly comfortable and contented we both felt, as we smoked our pipes by the loud-crackling fire after the completion of our meal.

We were far from being in sole possession of this little cove; bare of vegetation though it was, it swarmed with life. The hideous yellow land-crabs were very numerous, and attracted by the unwonted light, marched into our fire all night long, to be roasted in hecatombs. But more numerous than even these were the birds: there are several species of sea-fowl on Trinidad, but this cove was peopled only by a pretty sort of small gull like our kittiwakes.

It was now the breeding-season. On every stone

and stump of wood the female birds were sitting on their eggs ; our presence in no way alarmed them, they permitted us to stroke them, and seemed rather to like our kind attentions. The overhanging rock under which we slept, though not of larger size than is, say, a brewer's dray, must alone have been occupied by one hundred of these gulls, so prodigiously crowded with bird-life is this lonely island.

Every crevice in the rock had an egg or freshly-hatched chicken in it. One mother had a fluffy baby on a ledge within arm's reach of where I sat by the fire. Once when the mother was away I presented this baby with some roasted crab, which the dissipated little creature supped off eagerly. The mamma returned before it had finished the delicacy, and snatched the unwholesome morsel from its offspring, following up with a shrill and voluble sermon as to the peril of allowing strange beasts to stand one crab suppers.

Soundly we slept on our beds of stones and coral, disturbed though we were frequently by the claws of the inquisitive land-crabs that crawled over us in a most irritating manner throughout the night.

At midnight I was awakened by the much increased roaring of the waves on the beach ; a high sea was evidently running, and the spray of it occasionally dashed into our cavern. So I turned out to have a look at the weather ; I was far from reassured by what I saw. The rain was still falling, the clouds above were of a very stormy appearance, and were travelling in a southerly direction at a rate that betokened a stiff breeze. Even on this, the lee-side of the island, the sea had felt the influence of the wind, as its loud roar clearly proved. I knew that

as the sea rose it would break further out, in which case our boat anchored where it was would almost certainly be swamped by the rollers or dashed to pieces on the rocks. The night being dark, I was unable to distinguish it and relieve my anxiety.

To lose our boat and be left on this desert gulf, unable to cross the imprisoning mountains to a point opposite to the *Falcon*, whence we might make signals of distress to her, was no pleasant prospect ; it would be quite a question whether, even if the mate sailed round the island in search of us, he would be able to distinguish ourselves or our signals from the distance at which he would be bound to keep the vessel ; besides, there was no spare boat on board wherewith to fetch us off if discovered ; the "collapsible" had long since been worn out and thrown away. To stay here for a month or so, living on gulls and crabs, was, for me and the cook, I saw a now not improbable adventure.

However, anything was better than trying to get off to the boat in the dark, tired as we were ; so as nothing could be done till dawn, I piled up some more trees on the fire, lit a pipe, and smoked till I fell asleep again, which was not long.

We were awake at daybreak the next morning. "*Es muy feo*"—"It's very ugly"—was the cook's remark, after silently inspecting the ocean that lay before us for a few minutes. Ugly it was, but not so ugly as it might have been, for our boat was still riding safely beyond the breakers, though hidden from us at intervals as it fell into the hollows of the high swell. To reach her, however, burdened as we should be, would be a formidable undertaking. On

the sharp slippery coral rocks, offering insecure foothold at the best of times, the surf was dashing furiously. The rock, too, to which we had fixed the stern-line from the boat was now no longer out of reach of the waves, for the tide had risen considerably, so we had not the support of the rope to rely on just where we most needed it, that is in the shallow water among the breakers.

The weather looked very dirty, so we saw that we ought to hurry back to the *Falcon* without delay. But first we roasted some crabs, and off these, with rum and pipes, breakfasted—a very necessary preliminary, for we had hard and dangerous work before us; besides which we were fagged, chilly, and aching in our limbs, the result of our yesterday's adventures. Having lashed some of the stores on my back, including a bottle of rum, a hatchet, and my rifle, I proceeded to make for the end of the rope. As I was clad in a thick pilot suit and heavy sea-boots, I found myself to be a very unwieldy mass to guide when I got into the troubled water. I had to watch my time, and hold for life on the sharp coral as a wave approached, allowing it to go over me, a process attended with no few cuts and bruises. Half-drowned, and considerably knocked about, I at last managed to reach the rope, and proceeded to haul myself along it, hand over hand, towards the boat. Breathing between the passing waves I got on very well for a few yards, then the water deepened suddenly. I was out of my depth, and I found that my impedimenta were so heavy that it was quite impossible for me to keep my head above water, and the rope was so slack that my weight at once dragged it under.

I shall never forget that journey, and do not wish ever to repeat it. I was travelling under water. It was a race for life. I hauled myself along the line as fast as my hands would move, with the energy of a drowning man. I felt as if I must have gone over a mile, and yet no boat; and, indeed, the distance was a very long one for a journey of this description. So long was I under water, that the cook, looking on from the shore, thought I had been drowned.

But at last I felt the line tighten, my head rose above the water, and there was the boat just in front of me. Purple of visage, and gasping, I held on to the stern for a minute, then crawled on board, and without more ado lay down until the results of the semi-suffocation had passed, when a tot of rum from the bottle set me right again.

It was now the cook's turn. Not profiting by my example, he, too, overloaded himself. He passed through the same period of torture, and, after dragging his weary limbs into the boat, vomited a gallon or so of Atlantic Ocean that he had swallowed on his way.

After half an hour's rest we recommenced work. There were still a few things on the shore, so, stripping all my clothes off, I jumped into the water, and returned to the beach. Collecting what there was, I hauled myself back again along the line, this time with my head above water, for I carried but a slight burden. Then the cook in his turn had his second ducking, for the line had to be cast off from the rock.

On his return we proceeded to weigh the anchor. Alas! our troubles were not over yet, for strive our

utmost it would not come up, having evidently got foul of some rock at the bottom. After dragging our boat's stern down to the water's edge in our endeavours, we had to give it up, cut our cable as low down as we could, and leave our kedge behind us. We soon reached the yacht, running under our lateen sail before the strong wind. Those on board were much pleased at seeing us again, for they had been rather anxious for our safety.



## CHAPTER XV.

ON the following day, the 11th of December, a rather high sea was running, so I saw it would be impossible to effect a landing ; but I coasted along the shore, this time in a southerly direction, to prospect. I satisfied myself that South-West Bay was the best, if not the only portion of the island that afforded facilities for landing.

One's foot once on shore there, it would be easy to ascend the ravine above the cascade to the forest-clad domes above, and thence to descend to the fertile vales that are rumoured to exist on the windward side of the island.

So much I could perceive from the *Falcon's* deck. I have described further back the little promontory, or natural jetty, of coral formation, near the cascade, that juts out beyond the breakers. It was on that I determined to land as soon as the sea should go down.

Coasting this day to the southward I was astonished to discover what really magnificent scenery this little island contains. Passing South-west Point, a low narrow isthmus, terminating seawards in a small fantastic hill of basaltic columns, we opened out an

extensive gulf, narrow at its entrance, shut in by two stupendous precipices, but broadening within. The sea, even in this sheltered fiord, was tumultuous, and dashed furiously on the rocky islets that thickly covered its surface. The volcanic shores appalled the fancy with their strange forms and forbidding appearance. To the back of this gulf were lofty mountains, among others the Sugar-loaf.

Passing this nameless gulf, that probably no keel of boat had ever disturbed, we came to another and still stranger fiord, that caused an exclamation to burst from both of us, when it suddenly and unexpectedly opened before us, framed as it was picturesquely by a great arch in the cliffs. This was a deeper inlet than the other. Surrounded like it by fantastic rocks, its further extremity yet presented a most inviting appearance, for there a beautiful beach of golden sand fringed the white foam of the perpetually-breaking sea. Above this rose gentle slopes of verdure, of what nature we could not distinguish. Behind all rose steep, bare mountains, the great square bluff of South Cape, or Noah's Ark, as I named it from its shape (resembling that of the toy of our childhood), towering to the right.

To land here would be delightful, so we penetrated the gulf for some way ; but, alas ! had soon to abandon the attempt. For the bottom was everywhere sown with rocks, some rising above the sea as islands, others just awash, and these latter were a source of great danger to us. For at times, as our boat sank down into the hollow between two waves, we were horrified to perceive through the clear blue water some sharp rock just beneath us, on to which

we were rapidly falling, appearing, though, as if itself were rising upwards to pierce our fragile craft. The danger from this cause was so great that we found ourselves obliged to reluctantly return, having feasted our eyes on the strangest and grandest scenery, but having convinced ourselves of the impracticability of landing in any of these rough and rock-sown fiords to the southward of Trinidad.

On the next day, the 12th of December, success crowned our efforts, our perseverance was at last rewarded, and we landed in South-West Bay, without any difficulty whatever.

It was a glorious day, hot indeed, for it was mid-summer in this latitude, and the fierce tropical sun was vertical at midday. The wind had almost altogether fallen away, and it was very apparent from the *Falcon's* deck that there was far less surf on the shore than on any day hitherto. I determined now to make a final attempt at an exploration of this island, and of course chose the cook to be my companion. The boy also volunteered to join us, and was so eager that I foolishly consented to his doing so, for, though now seventeen years of age, he was not strong enough to endure the fatigues we were about to encounter among these burning crags and stifling ravines, and as the sequel showed was considerably knocked up by his journey, though behaving pluckily enough throughout.

We did not wish to encumber ourselves with much baggage, so, in addition to the clothes we wore, we carried between us three days' rations of biscuit, a cake of tobacco, a bottle of rum, a rifle, and a hatchet. The mate and Panissa rowed us off to the coral jetty

by the cascade, which I have described, and we were all astonished at the ease with which we effected a landing. The water was almost smooth, the rock being of coral formation offered so many irregularities of surface that we had no difficulty in climbing on it, and scrambling along its summit to the beach.

Having seen us safely on shore, the mate and Panissa wished us a prosperous journey, and rowed back to the vessel.

I have before described the aspect of the ravine at whose foot we now found ourselves. A small stream finds its way down to the sea, terminating its course in a cascade of some height. On reaching the stream we found its waters to be deliciously clear and cool, as indeed is all the water of Trinidad. We slowly toiled up the ravine, and wearisome work it was ; sometimes on one side, sometimes on the other, of the watercourse, at times floundering through it, according as one or the other offered the safest and easiest route. The ascent was steeper than we had anticipated, and great rocks fallen from above offered constant obstructions. The dead trunks of trees everywhere crossed the stream. Of vegetation there was at first none but a wiry long grass which covered the soil, wherever there was any. But after we had ascended a considerable distance we came across those beautiful products of the tropics, the tree-ferns. At first, of small growth, they filled up the hollow of the stream only, having exactly the appearance of our common English fern, but higher up we found them extending their fan-like masses of vivid-green leaves from the summits of lofty trunks.

At last we reached the summit of the ravine and

were on the Col, for such it was, a gentle depression between two mountains, and here found ourselves in the midst of a very different nature, and enjoyed the loveliness of a scene such as we little guessed stern Trinidad concealed within its encircling wall of wild crags. For now we saw no rocks, we were walking on a soil powdery and soft and dry, into which our feet sank. The mountain that rose above us on our left was a gentle dome of similar soil; and all was covered with a rich and beautiful vegetation. We were walking through a dense grove of tree-ferns, whose branches meeting overhead, like cathedral aisles, allowed but a subdued light to fall on the soft floor below, where millions of land-crabs crawled about; for these hideous beasts swarm on this island even to the mountain-tops. Other life there was none, not even insect.

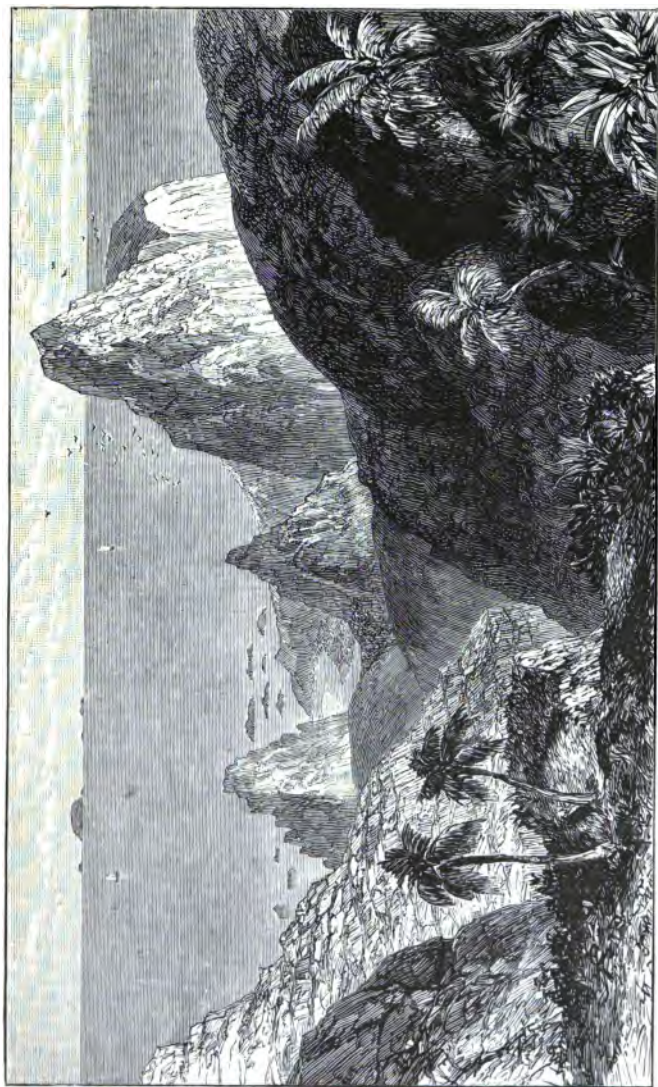
A gentle breeze blew over the Col from the windward side of the island, very grateful to us after our ascent of the hot, windless ravine. The scene, with its fresh green, seemed very beautiful to us at the time, as beautiful as anything we had ever seen. But after a month on the barren sea, and after the contrast of the dreary coast-scenery beneath us, any vegetation could not but seem very beautiful.

On the summit of the mountain there appeared to be some other tree growing with a darker foliage, but we left the inspection of this for our return journey, for we wished without delay to descend to the windward side of the island, which seemed to hold out a magic attraction for us. We expected, on very slight, if any, grounds, to make all sorts of valuable discoveries in that direction.

We reached the summit of the Col and looked down upon the eastern side of the island. A magnificent view stretched before us. From our great height we overlooked the mountains, ravines, and fiords, a wonderful panorama of strikingly contrasting or rather discordant colours. Dark, barren peaks towered up all around, huge pyramidal cylinders of burnt rock. These were based on gigantic couloirs or slopes of volcanic *débris*, of a bright, ruddy colour. These again were continued towards the sea by downs of vivid green, that in their turn sloped down to bays whose beaches were of the most brilliant white sand. Rugged promontories of coal-black rock divided these bays, and the sea for far out was studded with similarly black islets, on to which the sea broke furiously; beyond the white foam lay the blue Atlantic, on whose far horizon rose three small islets which we recognized as the Martin Vas, and which are distant from Trinidad about twenty-six miles.

From the summit of Trinidad we obtained several extensive views along the windward coast, and everywhere it seemed that landing in any description of boat was quite out of the question; this is not a clean coast as is that to leeward, but foul with many outlying reefs and rocks, while the surf is always much more dangerous, for the swell raised by the perpetually-blowing south-east trade-wind breaks on this shore, the first obstacle it has met after crossing thousands of miles of ocean.

I was much impressed by the strange nature of the scenery, which was such as I had never seen before, though common enough, perhaps, in some volcanic



The Martin Vas Islands, from Trinidad.

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districts. There was indeed something awful in the appearance of this island, with its chaotic masses of rock and unearthly lurid *débris*.

After a halt and frugal meal under the shade of the tree-ferns, we proceeded to follow the ridge of the mountain in search of some easy way by which to descend to the sea-shore. Half a dozen times we pursued some likely-looking route until stopped by the edge of some precipice, that compelled us to wearily retrace our steps.

On one occasion we clambered down a long slope of black *débris*, recalling to one's memory the magic mountain of black rolling stones described in the "Arabian Nights." This brought us to the bottom of a steep ravine ; advancing some way down this, we reached a spot where it fell precipitously into depths of utter darkness, and we had to clamber all the way back again.

At last we came to where a red mountain of loose stones and *débris* sloped gradually towards the sea and seemed to join on to the green downs below, no precipice intervening.

The day was now far advanced, and we were anxious to reach a stream by which to bivouac for the night ; for we were now weary and very thirsty, having come across no water since leaving the ravine of South-West Bay. Therefore we walked as fast as we could over the rolling stones of this mountain, hoping in an hour at the outside to reach the beach. Since leaving the fern-groves, we had seen no vegetation, but after progressing now some way down, we found the volcanic soil covered with a plant whose name I know not, spreading far and wide with rope-

like creepers, bearing large leaves, pink flowers, and a bean about the size of a haricot. This was the vivid-green vegetation that we had distinguished from the summit of the island.

We were now fated to meet a great disappointment. This hill terminated in a precipitous wall of rock, which it was quite impossible to descend. So we had to turn back once more.

We were now in a real mess. South-West Bay, with its water, was many hours of weary climbing from us ; weak and thirsty as we were, we could not reach it, at any rate the boy could not, for he now altogether collapsed, and said he could not walk another step, and would stay where he was. But move on we must, to stay where we were for the night meant death ; after a few hours' more deprivation of water not one of us could have made an effort to save his life. So, encouraging and pulling the boy along, we commenced to very painfully drag ourselves back—fearful work up those loose stones, that rolled down on us as if to press us back, and with the soil slipping away from under our feet at each step.

I soon saw that we could never reach South-West Bay, and must make an effort to find water nearer.

This mountain was a projecting spur from the central mass, and divided two ravines from each other. I thought it highly probable that a stream flowed down the ravine which was to our left, and suggested to the cook that we might try to descend to it. The *débris* on which we stood sloped down at a steep angle to the depths of this gorge, but the bottom of it we could not see. On its other side rose steep precipices of black rock.

The cook thought a moment or so, looked at the boy who was lying on his back, pale and breathing hard, and said, "I think we had better try it." He saw the difficulties and dangers of the plan as clearly as myself, but also saw it was our only chance. So we stirred up the boy and commenced the descent. At first it was easy enough, like an ordinary moraine in the Alps, but at every step the decline became steeper, until at last we had to lie on our backs and progress inch by inch with the greatest caution. To have slid a yard would have meant a rush ever increasing in rapidity into the depths below—a certain death.

This mountain was not composed merely of loose *débris*, or it could not have sloped at so steep an angle. It seemed rather to be a mass of rotten, or, rather, burnt rock, exceedingly brittle and breaking away when grasped in lumps, whose regular mathematical forms denoted the fiery ordeal the whole had been subjected to. It was but in places that the *débris* covered the slopes in layers of any thickness. So it was that this treacherous mass in consequence of its semi-consolidated state preserved an angle steeper than would be possible in inclines of loose stones or earth, at the same time offering no firmer support to hand or foot than would so much sand. We named this Mount Rotten, not while we were on it though, for then we respected it too much to call it any names.

It soon became apparent to me that to reascend this mountain would be quite impossible. To descend safely consisted of allowing oneself to slide down a few inches at a time with the least possible disturbance

of the *débris*; but one ascending could not avoid disturbing these rolling masses, and nowhere would the rock where it jutted out have supported his foot, it was no better than so much dried mud.

Thus if we found, as we might easily do, our further progress barred by precipices, a most awful fate was before us, for there we should have to remain lying on the bare stones until we died of thirst or fell over the edge.

Our position was certainly a dangerous one, and we progressed slowly in silence, startled occasionally by the sound of a shower of rolling stones, caused by the movement of one or the other of us, when we would stop, dig our elbows into the earth, and wait a moment or so, fearful to hear the sound followed by another and more terrible one. Small, but not on that account the less dangerous, precipices occurred occasionally on this slope, to avoid and go round which we had to work our way sideways—a difficult proceeding. But by degrees we approached the bottom without any accident, and now found that for the last two hundred feet or so we had to descend a rugged cliff of firm, black rock. The foundations, at any rate, of the Rotten Mountain were solid.

These rocks opposing no great difficulties to us, we reached the bottom of the ravine, and there indeed over the black stones flowed a tiny stream of water; in our joy at this we in a moment forgot all our fatigues and dangers, and lay down with our faces in the shallow current, taking deep draughts until our fearful thirst was quite assuaged. After this we lit a great fire of the dead trees that lay thickly around us, dined off biscuit and roast crabs, and slept soundly.

enough in spite of the drizzling rain that fell throughout the night.

We were so happy and comfortable, having found water, the only thing we cared for just then, that how we were to get out of this ravine never troubled our heads in the least. And yet we certainly seemed to have descended into a very prison, from which escape was impossible. There can be but four ways of getting out of a gorge—to descend it, ascend it, or climb one of its two sides. Now to climb up the side we had come down the Rotten Mountain, I have already explained was quite impossible. The opposite side was formed of precipice above precipice of bare, black rock, rising to a great height; that, too, was evidently not accessible. To descend the ravine was likewise quite out of the question, for just below our encampment the stream fell over a sheer wall of rock quite a hundred feet high. There was but one chance of escape left us, that of ascending the ravine; and that, too, appeared from our encampment to offer insurmountable difficulties. Great rocks fallen from above filled up the narrow bottom of the defile, in places opposing steep walls to our progress; and we could perceive that, higher up, the stream fell in a cascade over a precipice, seemingly similar to that below us, and about thirty feet in height.

We felt fatigued, stiff, and ill, when we woke the next morning, but commenced our difficult march, or rather climb, at daybreak. We had to exercise some ingenuity in getting over the steep, fallen rocks that blocked our path. We found the dead trees of great use to us here, and when we came to the foot of the precipice I have mentioned, we found means of

scaling it by piling the timber up against it—a proceeding that occupied us a considerable time. I believe that we should never have escaped from this ravine, had it not been for the adventitious profusion of these trees.

After a time our progress became easier; and emerging from the ravine, we were once more on the gently-sloping ridges of the central mountain-mass, where all the ravines have their heads. Proceeding along this ridge to the northward, and so still further away from the south-west bay, we continued to search for some practicable way of reaching the coast, for notwithstanding our yesterday's failures, we were not inclined to abandon our project.

However, I determined not to allow our party to travel more than a certain distance away from water, for I dreaded a repetition of the previous evening's adventures; besides, the day was cloudless and windless, and the heat was intense. It was a genuine tropical midsummer day.

We soon came to the head of a ravine that seemed to promise a way to the beach. It was a gloomy gorge, with sides formed of black rocks piled on each other in chaotic masses; a small stream trickled down it.

We clambered down from one big stone to another without much difficulty. After proceeding some way the scenery became wilder, and the rocks higher and steeper. Far below us we saw the white beach, with the blue sea beyond it, but we scarcely hoped to reach it, expecting sooner or later to find ourselves on the edge of one of the usual precipices that had already so often thwarted us.

Lower down we found that the ravine widened, and

a wiry grass grew in patches by the water-side ; other vegetation there was none, save, of course, the never-failing dead trees. Here the land-crabs swarmed like ants on an ant-hill ; huge beasts some of them, of a bright saffron colour. The birds, too, were in the ravine in greater numbers than on any other part of the island. It was evidently the breeding-place of one particular species, not the pretty kittiwakes that inhabited South-West Bay, but large, snow-white, fluffy, awkward creatures. Sitting on their eggs, tending their young, or sleeping, they covered all the stones. The whole valley stank of the fish on which they fed ; and foul as the fabled harpies in their manners, they dropped morsels of rotten fish from their mouths when we approached, and attacked us with fury. We had to beat them off with the weapons which we carried ; and let me say that it is no joke to have to defend oneself from a half-dozen or so of these angry mothers, flapping, pecking, and screeching about one's head all together. We had even to go round and avoid spots where they were thickest.

Certainly the whole nature, live or dead, of this lonely island has something uncanny about it that dismays and appals the imagination. This ravine, with its black rocks, varied occasionally by red volcanic *débris*, its strange vegetation of dead trees throwing out their skeleton arms, and its inhabitants savage, foul birds, and the still more offensive-looking land-crabs, struck us as having a particularly ghastly and spirit-depressing appearance. Among such scenery one felt as if anything horrible might happen at any moment, and a vague feeling of insecurity seized the mind.

We descended the ravine until we reached its termination, which was on an extensive down of soft red earth, covered with the creeping bean I have described before, and with purslain, which we of course ate eagerly.

The stream that had accompanied us down the ravine here left us, sucked up by the thirsty earth, so we had to abandon it, but not unreluctantly, for it was now oppressively hot, and we were tormented with a perpetual thirst. We discovered that there was nothing to prevent our descent from this down to the beach, and soon found ourselves walking over the fine, white sands. We had at last succeeded in reaching the windward side of Trinidad. We were on a bay to the north-east of the island, so proceeded to follow the shore towards the south, as the more fertile and inviting country lay in that direction. Thus we passed by the mouths of the different defiles that we had vainly attempted to descend on the previous day.

A broad margin of flat land, red earth, and then sands, extends between the mountains of this side of the island and the sea ; not as is the case on the leeward side, where the mountains generally fall sheer into the sea. Again, on this side the mountains terminate in great slopes of *débris* and downs, so that the streams are absorbed far up, and never reach the shore. We travelled along the beach from sandy bay to sandy bay, the mountains towering on our right, and the sea breaking on the coral reefs on our left. Spurs thrown out by the mountains divided bay from bay ; some of bare rock, some covered with sand, but all easy to cross. And now we noticed that this



coast, though more beautiful-seeming from the sea, with its green downs, was in reality a far less hospitable one for the shipwrecked mariner than would the bleaker leeward coast be ; for, with the exception of the ravine we had descended, it was clear to us that no route lay from here up the mountains ; precipices occurred everywhere above the domes of *débris*, and no issue of water was attainable from the beach.

We met plenty to attract our attention as we walked along the glaring sands and hot coral rocks. Every pool was full of quaint creatures, rainbow-coloured fish, bright, spotted crabs, and azure polypi ; and snakes striped like wasps or gold-speckled crawled among the stones. We picked up some beautiful specimens of coral and shells. We came across the tracks of turtle, they were evidently in the habit of visiting these sands at night, and we promised ourselves some sport later on. But first we must find water by which to encamp, and of this we saw no signs, not even that left by rains in the hollows of rocks.

We wandered on, opening out bay after bay for some hours, till on traversing a rocky promontory we came to an extensive gulf, backed on its further side by the huge mass of Sugar-loaf mountain ; great walls of rock surrounded it, and altogether it was as inhospitable-looking a place as shipwrecked sailor was ever cast on. Now all the shore of this gulf was strewn with wreckage. Along the whole of this windward coast we had perceived many spars, barrels, timbers, and other remains of vessels, but here they were in much larger quantity than elsewhere ;

so we named this dreary spot Wreck Bay. From its position in the region of the south-east trade-winds a vast amount of drift and many derelict vessels must of a necessity be driven on to the windward coast of Trinidad, and indeed there was a marvellous accumulation. Judging from its appearance some of this timber must have lain here for hundreds of years, and doubtlessly this beach preserves naval remains of every age since first vessels doubled the Cape of Good Hope. Apart from masts, barrels, and other driftage, we observed that more than one vessel, derelict doubtlessly, had been driven bodily on to the island, for we frequently saw two circular rows of ribs rising from the sand, with the corroded bolts sticking in them here and there, showing where the frame of some fine old ship lay buried.

What struck me as remarkable was that some of this wreckage had been cast up a great distance above what I judged to be high-water mark. Far up, jammed between two rocks, I perceived a huge iron beam that must have weighed many tons.

The explanation probably is that Trinidad, like several other lone-lying South Atlantic islands, notably St. Helena and Fernando Noronha, is subject to that terrible phenomenon known as the rollers. Those who have witnessed this describe how, on a fine, clear day, when the winds are still and the ocean smooth, of a sudden the waters in the offing are observed to become disturbed; billow after billow advances to the shore, gradually increasing in magnitude, until at last the waters are piled up in mountains far higher than the hugest storm-waves, that rush on to shore with fearful impetuosity, driving

from their anchors any vessels they may encounter, and hurling them far up on the land, beyond the reach of the highest spring tides. Distant hurricanes and submarine volcanic action are both suggested as the causes of this phenomenon.

Casting a line into the pools left by the ebbing tide we soon caught a much larger quantity of fish than we could carry with us, so we called a halt, lit a fire of drift-wood under the skeleton bows of a small vessel, and prepared a lunch of roast fish that was indeed excellent, but which we should have enjoyed all the more had we possessed water to wash it down with. We kept our thirst down to a certain extent this day by constantly damping our clothes with sea-water.

The boy and the cook became quite excited on seeing all these wrecks, and proceeded to hunt about for any valuables that might have been cast up by the sea. They found nothing but an empty Ackshaw brandy-bottle and a tin of Australian meat, which on being opened proved to be bad. Valuables there doubtlessly are buried among the sands; the heavier portion of the cargoes of these wrecks must still be here; that ancient vessel under whose bows we were lunching may have been some old Dutch East Indiaman, or Spanish galleon from Peru, and untold doubloons and bars of precious metal may have lain hidden within a few yards of us.

Had there been water anywhere near this bay, we should certainly have dug into some of these wrecks; but water there was none within half a day's journey. Had we even come across a sound barrel, we could have filled it from the stream we had left in the morning, and carried it to the scene of our operations.

We crossed over the promontory that divided Wreck Bay from the one next it to the southward, and found ourselves at the foot of Noah's Ark Mountain. There was no water flowing down its perpendicular slopes. Our further progress was barred by a precipitous mountain running out into the sea ; but we were now to the extreme south of the island, and all beyond this we had already explored. The next gulf was the one I had visited in the boat four days back, but on whose shore I had been unable to land in consequence of the dangerous outlying rocks.

All we could do now was to return to our stream in the harpy-inhabited ravine, and camp by it for the night. So, loading ourselves with as many fish and fine sea-crabs as we could carry, we trudged wearily back across the sands, and did not reach the foot of the gorge until dusk.

Ascending it until we came to a suitable spot we pitched our camp and lit a great fire. The stream formed a little pool just below, in which I had a most delicious and refreshing bath, while dinner was cooking. An excellent dinner it was—three kinds of fish, biscuit, rum, and unlimited water, not to forget the pipes of tobacco to finish up with.

More weird than even in the morning was the appearance of this ravine, now that the shades of night were falling. It was just such a scene as Doré's pencil would have done justice to : a desert of black stones over which hung a magic spell that killed all vegetation, so that the trees rose as gaunt leafless skeletons, and haunted by evil spirits in the shape of the foul birds brooding on every stock and stone, and the abominable reptiles, the land-crabs.





Our camp in the ravine.

[Vol. II., page 239.]

The huge mass of black crags that towered at the head of the gloomy defile was exactly what one would picture as the enchanted castle of the evil magician, within sight of which all vegetation withered, looking from over the desolate valley of ruins to the barren shore strewn with its sad wreckage, and the wild ocean beyond. We at our encampment, picturesque enough in the firelight, yet hardly realized my idea of the virtuous knights about to release the damozel imprisoned in the castle overhead.

But the land-crabs certainly looked their part of goblin guardians of the approaches to the wicked magician's fastness. They were fearful as the firelight fell on their yellow cynical faces, fixed as that of the sphinx, but fixed in a horrid grin. Those who have observed this foulest species of crab will know my meaning. Smelling the fish we were cooking, they came down the mountains in thousands upon us. We threw them lumps of fish, which they devoured with crab-like slowness, yet perseverance.

It is a ghastly sight, a land-crab at his dinner. A huge beast was standing a yard from me ; I gave him a portion of fish, and watched him. He looked at me straight in the face with his outstarting eyes, and proceeded with his two front claws to tear up his food, bringing bits of it to his mouth with one claw, as with a fork. But all this while he never looked at what he was doing ; his face was fixed in one position, staring at me. And when I looked around, lo ! there were half a dozen others all steadily feeding, but with immovable heads turned to me with that fixed basilisk stare. It was indeed horrible, and the effect was nightmarish in the extreme. While we slept that

night they attacked us, and would certainly have devoured us, had we not awoke, and did eat holes in our clothes. One of us had to keep watch, so as to drive them from the other two, otherwise we should have had no sleep.

Imagine a sailor cast alone on this coast, weary, yet unable to sleep a moment on account of these ferocious creatures. After a few days of an existence full of horror, he would die raving mad, and then be consumed in an hour by his foes. In all Dante's *Inferno* there is no more horrible a suggestion of punishment than this.

As I was keeping watch over the others I threw a large stone at one of two great crabs that were approaching the sleepers. It broke through his armour and killed him. His death produced an effect on his companion that I little expected, and which, I confess, made me feel quite uncomfortable and nervous in my exhausted condition. The reptile stopped when his companion fell, a copious foam then poured from his mouth, and his two eyes started right out of his head, hanging on to the ends of two long strings or horns. When I saw this ghastly exhibition I did half believe for a time that I was in a land of magic, surrounded by more than earthly enemies. The foul birds luckily slept, so we had not to defend ourselves against their attacks as well, or I know not how we should have got through the night. As it was, the ever-crowding crabs produced an almost delirium tremens sort of an effect on the imagination of a lonely watcher. But we managed to get through the night without affording them the unwonted luxury of a human supper.



On the morrow, after an early breakfast of cold fish and water—we had finished our rum,—we proceeded to reascend the ravine. When we emerged from it on to the plateau where the tree-ferns grew, the green dome that forms the culminating point of the island lay in front of us. I wished to explore the mountain, so as to determine the nature of the vegetation that covered its slopes, also to discover the pigs and goats that, if they existed at all on Trinidad, would most possibly be found in this fertile district.

A scramble of a little more than half an hour brought us to the summit of the dome. We found it to be everywhere covered with a dense grove of beautiful tree-ferns and a shrub like myrtle, which I satisfied myself was not the young growth of the species of tree whose dead specimens were strewn over the whole island.

These were still a mystery ; having once robed all Trinidad with one glorious forest, they had of a sudden perished as of a plague, leaving no young or seeds behind them. The once vigorous race was now utterly extinct. Of pigs and goats we also found no traces whatever ; they too, possibly like the old trees of hard red wood, had died out, leaving the island to the birds and fowl crabs that now alone inhabit it.

We now stood on the culminating point of Trinidad, and held a council as we looked down on the calm ocean, and the little *Falcon* appearing like a child's toy-boat, as she lay at anchor so far below. We decided that we should at once proceed to the southwest bay and embark on our comfortable craft ; we

had had enough of this lone rock of ocean, and wished to shake the dust of it from off our feet. Besides, we were worn, weak, and had consumed all our stores.

At any rate we had succeeded in very thoroughly exploring the island, and had made ourselves acquainted with all its resources, or rather lack of resources. We had certainly undergone much fatigue and no little peril, without any adequate result. In the course of our explorations we had been nearly drowned, had incurred much risk of perishing from thirst, and had run a very near shave of losing our lives among the mountains. The game had indeed not been worth the candle; but of course we anticipated nothing of all this when we started. We must now satisfy ourselves with the empty glory of having beaten the island, notwithstanding its vigorous defence and our frequent repulses. As I have before hinted, treasures might be dug from the wrecks on the windward sands. Let some other enterprising yachtsman sail in search of them; I certainly will not, having had quite enough of Trinidad. These, or something like these, were our deliberations on the mountain-top; then, resuming our march, we proceeded to the head of the south-west ravine, descended it, reached the coral jetty, and lit a fire to attract the attention of the *Falcon*. Perceiving us, Panissa rowed off for us in the boat; the water being very smooth, we got into it without difficulty, and were soon, weary yet joyful, reposing ourselves in the snug little vessel—this night to dine luxuriously indeed, and sleep undisturbed by land-crabs.

I forgot to say that we wrote a record of our adventures on a piece of paper, and, enclosing it in our empty rum-bottle, left it in the hollow of a stone, just above the cascade.

## CHAPTER XVI.

ON the morrow we got all ready to sail. We stowed away the fish we had salted and dried ; a sufficient quantity to last us for many months to come.

For some reason or other all hands were more or less ill on leaving Trinidad ; I was myself suffering from symptoms of malaria, which had been troubling me for some time, and which the recent fatigues I had gone through had much aggravated, so that I was debilitated and worn with fever, and almost unfit to work at all. The crew were no better. What was the matter with them, I could not pretend to say, for they had visited no malarious regions. I suspect that some of the fish we had caught and eaten were unwholesome, and we certainly had been indulging for some days on an exclusively fish diet.

Illness seemed to be the rule on board the *Falcon* during the whole of this homeward voyage. On our outward voyage all hands enjoyed constant health ; but these Italians are of a delicate constitution and not by any means so fitted as Englishmen, either to withstand the cold of northern seas, or exposure under tropical suns.

There was a good deal of imaginary illness on board,

too, later on, especially on the part of the mate, who had a most wholesome dread of the fevers of tropical ports, and who frightened himself four or five times into what, he thought, was yellow fever, but which I, as ship-doctor, pronounced to be indigestion, the results of over-eating—for he was of a gluttonous disposition—and treated with copious libations of castor-oil.

We were now to sail to the Brazilian coast, to the Bay of All Saints ; my crew had looked forward with joyful anticipation to landing on Trinidad, but not so to their arrival at their next port. The countenances of the mate and Panissa wore throughout the voyage an anxious gloom, which deepened as we reached the dreaded coast.

I cannot but think, from my experience of them, that the Italians are not a very brave race, or rather are blessed with a prudent and cautious nature. The Italian sailor may by long force of habit become more or less indifferent to the peril of his calling, but outside of it is rather a poltroon. He certainly does not possess that all-round pluck—recklessness, you may call it—of the British seaman. With the exception of my distinctly plucky and reckless old cook, my Italian sailors whined about all manners of imaginary dangers in a way that disgusted me, and highly amused the English boy, who began to entertain great contempt for them. Everything strange was a cause of alarm to them. They would not taste the tropical fruits. They would not walk by day in the Brazilian cities, being fearful of fever and sunstroke ; they would not walk in them by night, fearful of then encountering worse fevers, and cut-throats to boot.

But yellow fever was the great bugbear of the crew

during our cruise up the tropical American coast. The mate talked of nothing else, and evidently considered he was fated to fall a victim to the black vomit at our first port of call. All Italians from the River Plate entertain this exaggerated fear of the Brazilian ports, and the reason is not far to seek. The River Plate lies beyond the ordinary zone of yellow fever, which extends from South Brazil to Florida; but ten years ago the fearful epidemic broke out in Buenos Ayres for the first and last time. The infection had been brought down, so it was supposed, by vessels from Brazil. It spread rapidly through the lower parts of the city, being especially fatal to the Italians.

This experience of Yellow Jack not unnaturally led to an exceeding dread of this plague throughout the River Plate Republics. Rigid quarantine is enforced during the summer months on all vessels from the northern ports. The Italians, my mate among them, evidently consider that yellow fever rages in this awful form every hot season in the great Brazilian ports; whereas the truth is that in no other port of South America did there ever occur anything like so severe an outbreak as that in Buenos Ayres; and the Brazilian harbours are perhaps the healthiest of all big tropical seaports—it being very rare that the rate of mortality from yellow fever attains an alarming height.

Bahia lay 700 miles to the north-west of us, so this voyage was not to be a lengthy one. At about one p.m. of this day, December 15th, we weighed our anchor and hoisted our sails. As the wind was south-east the island kept it off us, so that we had to take to the

sweeps. Having got an offing with their aid, we at last felt the wind, which was but light, so that we did not make more than four knots an hour.

On the morrow, the 16th of December, the wind veered round to the north-east. At dawn we perceived a vessel steering almost as ourselves; at mid-day we came up with her and sailed close by. She was the *Pendragon*, an iron ship of 2500 tons, from San Francisco for Queenstown. She asked us to report her at Bahia, which we duly did on our arrival. This day we only made sixty-nine miles.

On the 17th of December we made 128 miles; all hands were now more or less prostrated with sickness and fever.

On the 18th of December we made 135 miles—the same glorious weather and north-east wind continuing. Being now midsummer, the temperature was high, even at sea—about 85° Fahrenheit in our cabin.

On the 19th of December we made 150 miles.

On the 20th of December we made 130 miles. We were now approaching the land; we passed one of the quaint-rigged Brazilian negro coasting-vessels this afternoon. The temperature in our cabin rose to 90°. This night the heavy dew indicated the proximity of land; at about midnight we sighted the light on Point Itapuan, and lay becalmed in front of it during the night, the breakers on the beach being distinctly audible to us.

At sunrise on the 21st of December we still lay becalmed. We were not more than one mile from the coast, near the Rio Vermillio. The rows of stately cocoas that fringed the sands and the hills behind with their dense vegetation looked certainly

most beautiful in the morning light, and the rich coast presented the very appearance of an earthly paradise. No wonder that the old navigators grew wildly enthusiastic when such lovely and fresh scenes burst upon them suddenly, after dreary months of sailing on an unknown sea. I called up the mate to see how he would be affected by this to him first glimpse of a tropical shore. He shook his head sadly ; his face wore a look of miserable foreboding. "Ah," he said, "the very look of it is enough ; you can see the fever there. Look at that curious green of the trees ; look at the yellow earth : any one can see it is unhealthy. I can see it, can smell the fever even from here." I lost my patience with the fellow and told him he was an ass.

Hundreds of curious fishing-catamarans now sailed out from the shore, manned by naked negroes. On beholding these primitive craft, and on hearing the barbaric jargon of their hideous crews, my men now concluded that I had brought them to a land of savages, as well as of fevers. A breeze springing up, we slowly sailed by the coast, doubled Fort San Antonio, and opened out that magnificent bay that is one of the wonders of the world, with its stately city rising steeply from the beach, mingling with the rank and lovely vegetation that only these favoured climates can show.

Exclamations of surprise and admiration burst from all. But these sentiments soon gave way to fear in the minds of two of the crew, as we sailed into the bay, smooth and sultry after the fresh and heavy Atlantic outside. A headache at once attacked the mate, and tears were in his eyes as he informed me that he



knew that yellow fever had already struck him. "Take half a tumbler of castor-oil," I said to him, "and don't eat so much." I steered the vessel to our old berth under Fort La Mar, and there dropped our anchor, after a voyage of six days from Trinidad, and thirty-eight days since we sailed from Montevideo.

It was now a year since I had last visited the quaint old Portuguese city of the ever-tinkling bells, and I was glad to meet my friends and enjoy once more the delights of civilization. I determined to stay over Christmas at Bahia, as the vessel was in need of some repairs, and particularly of a good cleansing out, so as to exterminate if possible the myriads of cockroaches that infested her. I expected remittances of the wherewithal at Pernambuco, so thought I should save time if I left the *Falcon* at Bahia while I steamed to the former port and back, thus avoiding the necessity of calling there in my own vessel. My crew of course were much pleased with my plan, for Pernambuco has a very evil reputation in the River Plate as being by far the most pestilential of Brazilian seaports.

Pernambuco is only some 450 miles—looked upon as nothing in this land of enormous distances—from Bahia, so the voyage by steamer is not of long duration or costly.

On the eve of Christmas Day I embarked on the steamer *Bahia*, one of a very well-conducted native company, whose vessels run up and down the entire coast of the empire, calling at every important port. The voyage was a very pleasant one. I have had some experience of ocean passenger-vessels, but none have I ever found more thoroughly comfortable in

every respect than this Brazilian mail-steamer. There were no foreigners on board save myself and two others of the passengers, one a German diamond-merchant, the other a Capucin friar from Florence. We three therefore naturally were attracted to each other at the commencement of the voyage, being, as the priest put it, if not fellow-countrymen, at any rate fellow-Europeans, and so neighbours. The German was a thorough cosmopolitan, and so a pleasant companion ; but the poor priest, whose face wore an expression of extreme discontent and sorrow, could talk but on one subject, that of which his heart was full, his intense dislike of the manners and customs of the people, of the climate, and of everything indeed pertaining to Brazil. His homesickness was apparent, and the poor fellow said himself, "Nostalgia will kill me." So far he was plump enough, though sour-looking—a rather villainous-featured, black-bearded priest, of the true inquisition-stake-and-fire type. His conversation was not cheerful, being somewhat like that of my mate. He spoke with loathing of the blacks, the savage Indians, the fevers, the wild beasts, the reptiles, snakes, insects, the terrible dense forests, and the heat ; to hear his eloquent complaint one would take this glorious empire to be a very inferno of horrors, instead of the earthly paradise it really is.

The German and myself soon struck up an acquaintance with our Brazilian fellow-passengers, chiefly students going home for their vacation from the University of Rio de Janeiro, very nice young fellows, and evidently gentlemen. There were some families also on board, with charming young ladies, and all trying to render themselves as agreeable as possible

to their travelling-companions. The Brazilians are indeed, at any rate superficially, a delightful people, from the nobility down to the mulatto peasant-proprietors.

Now that I had visited the River Plate States, I was much struck, as all travellers to South America have been, by the tremendous contrast presented by the Portuguese and Spanish settlements, the Portuguese empire of Brazil and the numerous republics of the Spanish-speaking peoples. Notwithstanding the existence of slavery, and the great degradation of the European race by mixture with the negro, Brazil strikes the stranger as being a really civilized nation. Most of the Spanish republics, on the other hand, appear to him to be but badly-organized hordes of utter savages. To the most superficial observer is this great difference apparent. In Brazil a sense of security is experienced ; a feeling that one is in a well-ordered state. The government, alone in all America, is monarchical, and the old-fashioned system does indeed shine out bright here when compared with the wild democracies that surround it—republics with perfect constitutions framed on the highest principles of Bentham and Montesquieu ; where universal freedom is preached, and the vilest tyranny of unlettered savage chieftains practised.

In Brazil a very sufficient amount of liberty is enjoyed, the people are contented, revolutions are unknown, property is secure, the state can borrow money in the European markets at a low interest.

And now look at the other picture presented by nearly every republic, from Mexico to Uruguay. It is unnecessary to describe that picture—pronuncia-

mentos, bankrupt exchequers, Nero-like tyrants cropping up one after the other to float so-called governments on blood and robbery, each in his turn falling a victim to some new cut-throat aspirant to the dictatorship.

In the republics the Creoles of Spanish blood are ignorant, lazy, hate the foreigner they cannot do without, and call him a "gringo." In Brazil all this is reversed.

The Brazilian has one fault, however. He may have more—probably has,—but this is a very great one, or at least seemed so to me while living on this steamer, as it seriously interfered with my comfort ; whereas, whatever other faults he may have did not get in my way ; to them therefore I am tolerant. The fault I speak of is this, the Brazilian does not know how to dine comfortably. This to the Englishman, proverbial for his dining propensities, is simply horrible and unpardonable, for is not dinner one of the greatest duties of life. But the Brazilian slurs this sacred duty over. All the courses are put on the table at once ; then comes a scramble, every one gobbling away as if for very life—helping himself from any or all dishes, pell-mell and anyhow.

Now, a most excellent dinner of many dishes was served on board this steamer—a dinner to linger over, and it was all done in thirteen minutes exactly by my watch. Even when hurried by business this is inexcusable ; but on a steamer, where one has nothing to do but eat and drink, and look forward with anticipation to the next meal as soon as one is finished, such a custom is positively criminal.

Why thus hurry over the chief pleasure of the day ?

Life is not so full of joys. Should we not advance delicately from course to course, dally over the dessert, and then, softly meditating, linger long over the soothing cigar, coffee, and its *chasse*. But, alas! the good dinner is all over in thirteen minutes, though it be Christmas Day. Very little wine is drunk, the coffee is taken standing, no one follows it with a *chasse*, every one rushes off, and the German and myself do not feel that we have dined. However, we console ourselves by sitting under the awning on deck, smoking excellent cigars, and watching the glorious coast scenery as we pass it—leagues after leagues of sandy shores lined with waving cocoanuts, and green hills studded here and there with great mango-trees.

So passed my Christmas Day, like my last one at sea. On the 26th of December the steamer anchored for some hours in the Bay of Maceio, off the town of the same name, to take in cargo. This is not a considerable seaport; there were but six vessels at anchor when we arrived, nearly all Englishmen loading with sugar, and, like ourselves, rolling about heavily in the high Atlantic swell, for the bay is exposed to the prevailing on-shore wind. The glaring white town is built on the slopes of a hill; in front of it is a fine, sandy beach, on which there is a perpetual surf. As everywhere else on the Brazilian coast, groves of cocoanuts line the shore, and beautify what would otherwise be a rather arid scene.

The diamond-merchant and myself went on shore for a while, being landed by a native boat on the end of a rather rickety pier. We found Maceio to be an exceedingly uninteresting town—a mere congregation,

for the most part, of small huts inhabited by negroes and mulattoes. There was a tramway, of course, as everywhere else in South America, and the strings of nearly naked slaves and carts that were bringing down the sacks of sugar to the beach, not without much bustle and noise, lent some life to the miserable streets. The export of sugar from Maceio is very considerable, and this was the season of greatest activity in that trade. We soon had enough of this glaring town, for the heat was very intense. It was indeed seasonable weather—that is for Christmas in the southern tropics.

Early on the morning of the 27th of December we were off Pernambuco, which from the sea appears insignificant enough, huge city though it be, on account of its low and perfectly flat site. Forests of cocoas seemed to surround it. I had heard a good deal of the celebrated recife or natural break-water which forms the harbour of Pernambuco, but I was not prepared to see so wonderful a freak of nature as it really is.

The recife is a coral bank or reef extending along many hundreds of leagues of the Brazilian coast. In places there are openings or gates in this reef, through which vessels can sail into the smooth lagoons within, and here ports are established.

Here, at Pernambuco, the recife is parallel to the shore, and distant but eighty yards or so from it. It rises in a broad, squared wall of coral, perfectly regular, being some feet above the level of high-water springs. To the north of the town this wall terminates abruptly, and the reef from that point is below the sea-level. At the end of this wall is an old fort erected

by the Dutch, just under which is a very narrow channel deep enough for the passage of vessels ; but the broadest and safest opening through the reef is still further to the north. Steaming through this latter passage we proceeded up this admirable harbour, which cannot but strike every visitor with astonishment. It is, as it were, a broad canal, thronged with vessels flying the flags of every civilized nation. On our right hand extended a fine stone quay bordered by an avenue of shady trees, behind which were the long rows of houses, the stores of merchants, hotels, banks, and cafés. On our left, perfectly parallel to the quay, extended the recife, a straight wall of dark coral, squared and so regular that one could scarce believe that this was the work of nature and not of man. Cannons captured in the Paraguayan war were firmly let into this wall at short intervals, to which the vessels were moored. Under shelter of this breakwater the water was smooth as glass ; while on its other side the great Atlantic waves, driven up before the trade-wind, broke furiously, at times dashing showers of spray right over among the shipping in the still canal. The waves not unfrequently wash over the recife ; but, as storms are almost unknown on this coast, it is rare that much damage is inflicted.

Being recommended to it by my friend the diamond-merchant, I took up my lodging at the Hôtel d'Europe, which, though not perhaps ranking among the first-class hotels of this city, is, I should imagine, by far the pleasantest ; for it is situated on the quay, and so receives the full benefit of the cool trade-wind blowing from the sea. Just in front of it is the avenue

of shady trees, where the skippers sit smoking, drinking iced drinks, and discussing freights. The hotel is kept by a most agreeable French widow, who understands how to make her guests comfortable.

After breakfast I proceeded to explore this, the third city of the empire, and the most European in its general appearance. Pernambuco has been called by some imaginative people the Venice of Brazil. The resemblance consists merely in the fact of water being a rather common feature of both cities. The River Capibaribe doubles upon itself several times while traversing Pernambuco, and hence one crossing the city in a straight line comes frequently upon broad, canal-like stretches of slow-flowing water bordered by quays and houses. But the architecture and general colouring is anything but Venetian. These canals present an animated appearance, being covered with the small craft of the country that bring down the produce from the interior. Not here are the gondolas, but long, narrow, native dug-outs or canoes, formed of hollowed trees, paddled by negroes and other swarthy savages whose form of head denotes their Indian blood. The catamarans, too, mere rafts, skim along the water with an astonishing speed under their white, triangular sails. Some of these canals are exceedingly foul—well calculated to breed yellow fever, one would imagine.

Pernambuco, translated, signifies the mouth of hell, and its reputation is well described by its name. Low-lying, as it is, and surrounded by mangrove-swamps and lagoons of foul, stagnant water, it ought to be a most unhealthy place. Indeed, so it once was; being justly reputed, as I have said, the most



pestilential seaport of Brazil. But Pernambuco is gradually acquiring a better reputation. Yellow fever does not visit it as often as of old, nor are the epidemics of this plague so severe as they were. An English company has undertaken the drainage of the town, and the increased salubrity is by many put down to this cause. Again, there is but little malaria even in the suburbs and in the vicinity of the swamps, for the fresh trade-wind that never fails by day effectually disperses the deadly exhalations.

For seven days I had to wait at Pernambuco, as no steamer sailed for the south during that period—thus I was able to study the city and its ways. My chief impression left was that of sugar. Sugar indeed pervaded Pernambuco when I was there. The very air was sugar; the city was paved with it; the heavy smell of it was positively oppressive at times. The gates of great barn-like stores gaped on the streets, and within each I saw half-naked Indians, negroes, and Meztizzos piling up very mountains of the yellow crystals with their spades. Clumsy cart after cart, truck after truck, lumbered creaking from every quarter to the quays, obstructing the ways, with molasses dripping out between their boards. Pernambuco indeed reeks of sugar; from the stores it overflows into the road; under one's feet is a brown, sticky mud, like tar in consistency, and far more soiling than even our greasy London mud, for the mud of this city is of unrefined cane-sugar.

The country round Pernambuco, though flat, is exceedingly beautiful, overflowed as it is with a vegetation of whose magnificence no one who has never visited the tropics can have any conception. I went

one evening to Caxanga, which is to Pernambuco somewhat what Richmond is to London, and about an hour's journey by rail. It was one of those magical evenings that are common enough in this land of perpetual summer, starlit and still. Our whole way lay through a wonderful, fairy-like grove, where trees and plants that are valuable treasures of the hot-house to us grew in wild luxuriance. We passed villa after villa nestling in gardens; and what gardens! what magical colours! what dark green masses, or light, feathery palms and bright-flowered creepers! and, more wonderful than all, the frequent great trees, leafless, but covered for leaves with bouquets of vivid purple or crimson. The villas were gaudy to an English eye—horrible would they be under an English sky, but here quite harmonious to their surroundings, and in good taste; luxurious palaces of the tropics, where dwelt the wealthy Pernambucan merchants—open and airy mansions, all of light colour, many covered with porcelain tiles, most of them light-blue, picked out with white, as if houses of Wedgwood china.

Caxanga itself is not much of a place, but there are splendid baths of cool spring water that are the chief attractions, for a cool bath is not to be found everywhere in this climate. To the north of Pernambuco is a hill overlooking the sea, on which is built the ancient and now almost deserted city of Olinda. Between the two cities extends a dreary, marshy plain, with lagoons and festering mangrove-swamps, tufts of palms rising occasionally above the lower vegetation. An excellent road has been carried across this wilderness from one city to the other.

Feeling very energetic one day, I walked along this to Olinda. I rather repented of my project before I had got half-way, for it was broiling hot, and shade there was none. The only people I passed were naked negroes, wading in the black mud among the mangroves in search of crabs, and they looked at me with surprise as I passed, for a white man tramping along this road on a midsummer midday was a strange sight indeed to them.

Olinda itself, one of the most ancient of American towns, is now a city of the dead. All the houses are old, of the antique Portuguese style. Churches and convents seem to be the most common buildings; their number is extraordinary. The streets are steep, winding and ill-paved, grass-grown and silent; even the magnificent cathedral appears to be neglected. Great indeed is the contrast between Olinda and modern, bustling Pernambuco. The situation is very fine, and a magnificent view of the distant seaport and of all the country around is obtained from the open places. Great palm-trees rise in every portion of the city, and set off to advantage the austere and massive ecclesiastical edifices.

On reaching the summit of the town, where from a plot of grass in front of what I took to be a monastery the best view is commanded, I sat down to make a hurried pencil-sketch. Hitherto I had walked through silent streets, hearing but the echoes of my own foot-fall, when now I was suddenly startled by the most fearful and blood-curdling yells just behind me. Leaping up, I perceived they proceeded from a tumble-down-looking building that I had not before observed. It was somewhat like one of the cages in which the

lions are imprisoned at the Zoological Gardens, for a stout iron grating was carried along the front of it ; within were several men, mulattoes for the most part, with faces like wild beasts, who shook the bars and raised the fearful cries that had startled me. This, as my readers may have guessed, was the pauper lunatic asylum.

It was not until the 3rd of January that a steamer called at Pernambuco on her way to the southern ports. This was the *Magellan*, a small, uncomfortable English vessel of the Pacific Mail Company. I took passage in her to Bahia ; not, by the way, having effected the object of my trip to Pernambuco ; for the solicitor who had been instructed to forward moneys to me had entirely neglected to do so. May he find himself thus left in the lurch in a foreign land some day, that he may learn all the inconveniences that follow from such carelessness.

## CHAPTER XVII.

ON returning to Bahia I carried out a project that had long been on my mind. When I first sailed into this harbour, a year back, I was very desirous of undertaking a cruise among the islands and bays of that beautiful inland sea, the Reconcavo.

Pleasant, indeed, would it be to explore for a month or so the shores of the gulf, and the many navigable rivers that flow into it—ever among a most magnificent scenery, and constantly coming upon some quaint old seaside Portuguese town or fortress.

A month I could not now spare, but I determined to devote a week to a voyage on the Reconcavo, and found two English friends at Bahia who were enabled to take a holiday and accompany me.

My poor mate was of course very sad on hearing of this plan. "What?" he said; "you are going to take us up those pestilential rivers? we will all die." It was vain to tell him that malaria was unknown in the breezy neighbourhood of the ocean.

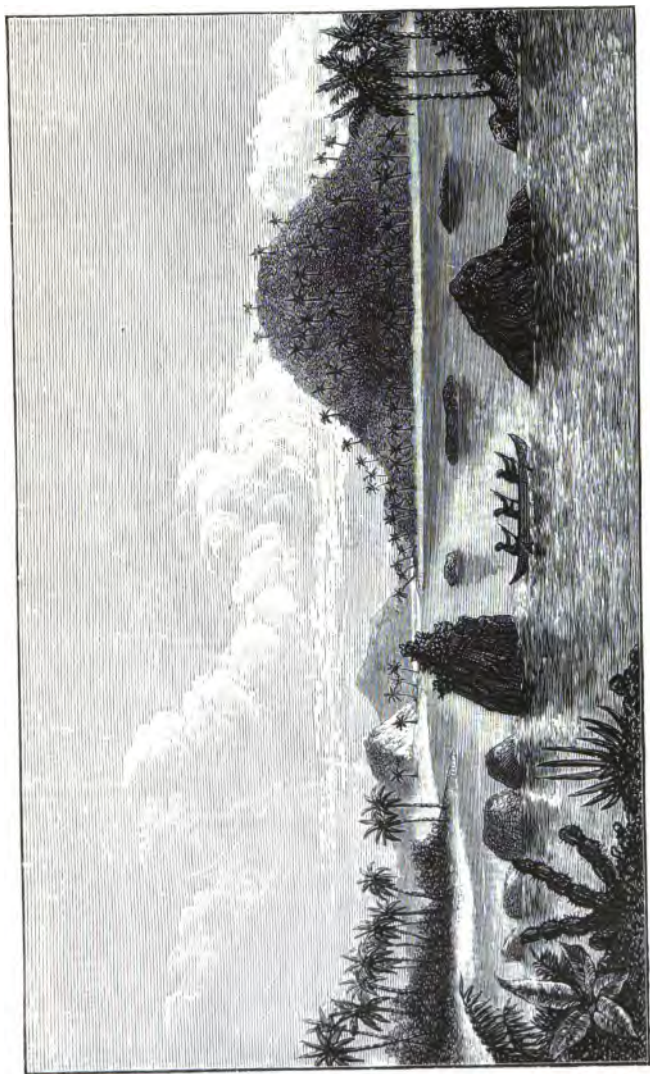
We procured a pilot, or rather a Portuguese harbour-boatman, who said he was a pilot for the rivers, and sailed away before a glorious sea-breeze on the 7th of January. As I had already steamed up the

rivers Cachoeira and S. Amaro a year before, we made for the mouth of the river Jaguaripe, which, after these, is the most considerable river flowing into the gulf of Bahia.

First we steered right across the Reconcavo to the northern extremity of the large island of Itaparica, which supplies the market of Bahia with fruit. This island is famed for its beauty, and indeed, when we approached it, we could not but allow that it well merited its reputation. Gentle hills rise from the shore, covered with a dense, rich vegetation—a tangled forest of cocoas, bread-fruit-trees, mangoes, bananas, jackas, palms, and other trees; these groves are of a delightful fresh green, and resound with the songs of birds. Below are beaches of sand, lined with mangroves. As the water was deep, we kept close to the island as we coasted round it. We passed several little villages, whose negro inhabitants devote their time to fishing and whaling; small whales are common in the Reconcavo, notwithstanding the constant war that is waged upon them.

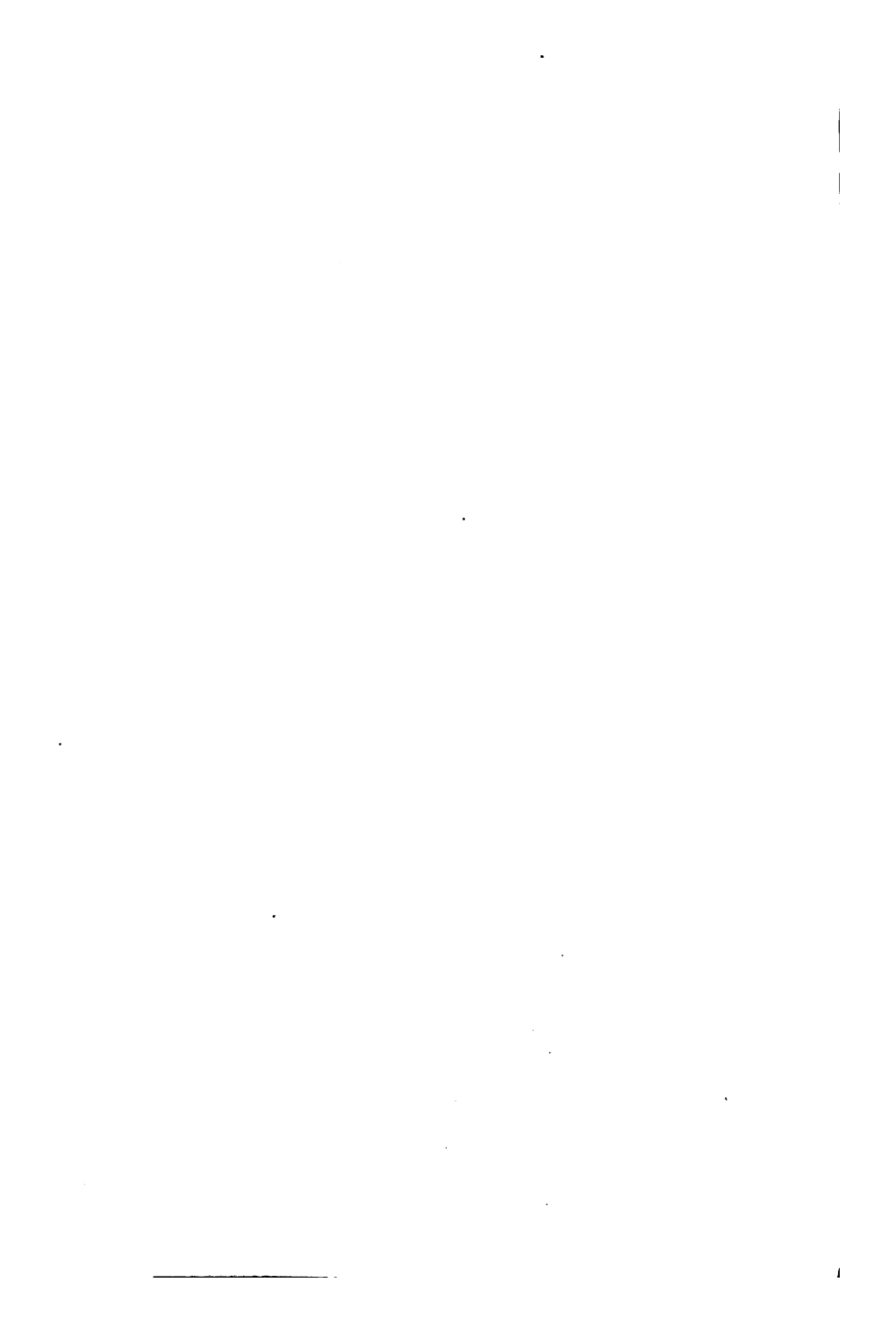
On doubling a point we opened the capital of the island, the sleepy town of Itaparica, dominated by an old fort. We saluted it with our cannon, but awoke none of the citizens, and did not alarm the garrison, for no one appeared on rampart or beach. Sailing from here to the mainland, we entered the mouth of the river, and after ascending it until dusk came to an anchor a mile below the little town of Maragoujipina, and there passed a night among the mosquitoes, surrounded by dense groves, all glittering with myriads of fire-flies and noisy with cicadas.

On the next morning there was no wind; therefore,



On the River Jaguaripe.

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as our pilot told us that we were not far from the city of Nazaret, we determined to leave the vessel at her anchor and row there in the dinghy. On being closely cross-examined as to the exact distance, he informed us that it was about "one quarter of the half of a quarter of a league." I suppose he thought this would sound nice and precise to us, but it hardly tallied with his next statement, that it would require from an hour to an hour and a half's rowing to reach it.

Three rivers met just above our anchorage. Our pilot pointed out one as being the river of Nazaret, so we proceeded to pull up it, taking him with us, so that he might set us right in case of our being at a loss at any other point.

This river flowed across a muddy plain, but ahead of us, at about the distance of three miles, were wooded hills under which, we were led to understand, lay Nazaret. But these hills, though but three miles off as the crow flies, were an unconscionable way off by water ; for this stream wound about in a most irritating fashion, so that we were rowing away from our destination as often as not.

We were crossing an utterly deserted country, whose scenery was anything but cheerful. On either side of us stretched great mangrove-swamps ; the black mud bubbled, and festered, and stunk under the hot sun ; and the mangroves themselves, those most repulsive of all plants that grow, drooped down from half their height in muddy festoons, showing the point to which the sea-tide rose. Over them crawled innumerable crabs, red, and blue, and yellow, and green—the only reptiles that can find a congenial

habitat in such a slough. But a mangrove-swamp has often been described before, and all who have seen it bear witness to its loathsome ugliness.

On and on we rowed, and never seemed to get nearer to the hills; then dark clouds crossed the heavens, and the rain fell, as it can fall in Brazil, drenching us in a moment of course. This did not improve the aspect of our dismal surroundings. At last we did reach the hills, and found that the river skirted them; on one side of us now was the swamp, on the other were the fertile, but uninhabited, heights.

The river now wound more than ever, following each irregularity of the hills. We rowed on for a considerable time, but no sign of Nazaret—none of the bells and fireworks that announce to one yet afar off the presence of a Brazilian city. We, so cheerful hitherto, began now to look wrathful; and the pilot, so very confident hitherto, puzzled.

"Are you sure we are right?"

"Certain; in a quarter of an hour we are there," was his constant reply to our often-repeated inquiry.

But we doubted him, and when at last we saw a little bamboo rancho nestling in a banana-grove on the hillside, we shouted loudly, to the evident dislike of our guide, who did not approve of being mistrusted. The negro householder heard us, and came out.

"Ho! Patrice!" called to him one of my friends—it is the custom to address every peasant as Patrice hereabouts, until you know his real name. "Ho! Patrice! how far to Nazaret?"

"To Nazaret!" replied the sable one, chuckling. "This is not the Nazaret river."

"What river is it then?"

"The river Sao Geronimo."

The unfortunate pilot, who had already come to the conclusion that the crew of the *Falcon* were a set of ferocious pirates, turned white on hearing this, and was fain to jump overboard, in order to escape our just anger. But finding that we were not going beyond classical imprecations, he consented to remain with us; and wet, sad, hungry, and thirsty we rowed all the weary miles back to the *Falcon*, which we reached at about two p.m.

After a meal we set out again in search of Nazaret; this time we did hit on the right river, which did not traverse a mangrove-swamp, but flowed over a bed of silver sand, across an agreeable and diversified country.

Nazaret we found to be a pretty little town, very picturesquely situated on the slopes of a hill. The river is not navigable beyond this; here it rushes noisily over a rocky bottom, and is spanned by a fine bridge.

Of course it was a saint's day, or rather half a dozen saints' days, and the town was *en fête*. Rockets and crackers fizzed and banged all around us, the bells were ringing, the church was illuminated within and without at sunset, and we witnessed a curious ecclesiastical procession of priests and negro acolytes, certain of whom bore censers and danced in front, revolving with slow and stately step, singing the while quite in the old Biblical style. When we had seen enough of all this, and had danced at a mulatto ball, we rowed back, and at three a.m. partook of a digestible supper of cold tinned plum pudding and rum.

The next day we sailed down the river till we were off the town of Jaguaripe, when, the wind failing us, we came to an anchor. This little town is built on the slopes of a hill covered with tropical fruit-trees, and is dominated by a fine old church. I went on shore with my two friends; it was blazing hot, being but an hour after midday, and all the inhabitants were within, enjoying their siesta; we Englishmen were alone abroad. After wandering about for some time, we were passing a large stone house, when an upper window of it opened, and a man, putting his head out of it, most courteously invited us to come up out of the sun and refresh ourselves. Such hospitality to an utter stranger is thoroughly Brazilian. We entered, and were received by this kind person in a large room whose windows overlooked a splendid and extensive view—leagues upon leagues of undulating tropic forest-land intersected by many winding rivers.

Our host produced English bottled beer and cigars, and entered into a lively conversation with us with that unaffected cordiality and charm of manner that so distinguishes the gentlemen of this empire. He introduced us to his wife and children, and also to his two very pretty and agreeable sisters-in-law. He told us that he was the chief of Jaguaripe, which he described as a very quiet, peaceful sort of a place. Just below his mansion was a gloomy mass of masonry, a building large enough to lodge all the inhabitants of the town; that, he told us, was the prison; but do not, he continued, "form an estimate of the number of our criminals from the size of our prison; there are no prisoners in it, and there have

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not been any for a very long time. Indeed, we have no police here now."

There is indeed very little crime in Brazil ; the mulattoes that form the bulk of the free population are of an amiable, gentle nature ; in this respect forming a striking contrast to the natives of the Spanish republics. Neither, again, is there to be found in the free mulatto or negro of Brazil that insolence and those other most objectionable qualities that so distinguish the mulattoes and negroes of the United States, the West Indies, and other Anglo-Saxon countries, wherein slavery has been an institution. The reason is not far to seek. Black blood is a reproach in the latter. The Anglo-Saxon will not marry with the negro, as does the Latin, and more especially the Portuguese colonist. He hates and despises the son of Ham, and all who have the slightest taint of African blood.

The mulatto knows this ; feels it deeply ; despises himself that he is of a despised race. Though feigning to imagine himself a man and a brother, he is aware that he is a social outcast, that the whites will not eat with him or associate with him ; so he revenges himself by insolence and brutality, feeling that it is vain for him to be ambitious, that he can never rise, he gnaws his heart out with his thwarted aspirations and crushed vanity. But in Brazil this caste-feeling does not exist at all, or at any rate to a very slight extent. The best families have negro blood in their veins. The pure whites are an insignificant minority, and the mulatto, taking a pride in himself, feeling himself to be really on an equality with the other citizens in every respect, falls into his natural position,

and has no need, like the Barbadian nigger, that worst of his species, to try and pass off his inferiority by unbounded insolence to those of the superior race.

However, may the day be very far off when the Anglo-Saxon, like the Portuguese, feels no degradation in allying himself with the African; for the nigger, though he may be a man, is certainly not a brother, whatever his white friends may say.

Our host and the ladies came off to inspect the *Falcon* in the afternoon, and were much interested in all the appliances of the little vessel.

We sailed from Jaguaripe at daybreak on the following morning, and tacked down on the top of the ebb tide until we reached the centre of a broad stretch of water within the Barra Falsa or false entrance to the Reconcavo, which, obstructed with reefs as it is, has caused the destruction of many a vessel that has mistaken it for the true passage.

Suddenly we ran hard upon a sandbank and stuck fast. The unfortunate pilot, who had been confident as usual, now burst into tears, and rushed up and down the deck, stamping and raving. On being sternly asked for an explanation of his conduct, he jerked out between his sobs,—

“Ah! senor, it is not my fault indeed; it is the mermaid’s.”

“The mermaid’s! thou idiot.”

“Yes, Senor; there was never a bank here before. I have sailed ten thousand times across here, but the last time—yes, close here—indeed, just here, I saw a mermaid; I did not throw her a gift, and thus has she revenged herself. Ah, dear! ah, dear! what a miserable wretch am I!”

We could of course abuse him no more after so satisfactory an exculpation of himself. A pilot cannot in justice be held responsible for the acts of a malicious mermaid, who piles sandbanks in his course. Had we known the Reconcavo was infested by these dangerous maidens, I should not have ventured to navigate its waters in my precious *Falcon*.

All the fishermen of this coast have an unshakable faith in mermaids; few among them are there that have not at least once seen one of these beautiful water-people. It is customary to place mirrors and combs on rocks by the sea, as propitiatory gifts to them.

As the tide was still ebbing, we had to reconcile ourselves to a few hours' stay on the mermaid bank; so I rowed off with my friends to the coast, about a mile and a half distant, where we perceived some houses. After landing on the sandy beach at the mouth of a small river, we walked up to the village, the polite, kind yellow people of which informed us that it was called by the curious name of Caixa de Pregos, or Box of Nails. The houses or rather bamboo huts are not built in streets, but scattered through a dense and pleasant grove of bananas, cocoas, mangoes, bread-fruit-trees, &c., winding footpaths connecting one with the other in such a way that the settlement is a very Hampton Court maze. The whalebones that occasionally form the doorposts of these huts indicate the occupation of the people.

We at last, after much wandering in the maze, came to a little bamboo public-house where passable cashaça or white rum was vended. Over the bar were pasted two plates cut out of a Portuguese illustrated

paper. One was the portrait of Mr. Gladstone, the pendant was Henri Rochefort!

One of my friends came across an old mulatto boatman of his here, who undertook to paddle off to the *Falcon* at high tide and pilot us across the banks. After being introduced to, and then cordially welcomed by, every man, woman, or child, we, not unregretted, left the village of Box of Nails, and rowed back to the *Falcon*.

At four p.m. the tide had risen two feet, and we were again afloat; then our new pilot came off to us in his dug-out. A long discussion ensued between him and the old pilot; for the former insisted that the bank on which we had grounded had existed where it now was for twenty years, to his knowledge. This rather shook our faith in the mermaid story, and we led our unfortunate Portuguese, who was now getting rather sick of the *Falcon*, to understand that we should throw him overboard if he played the fool with us any more, mermaids or no mermaids.

Our mulatto piloted us over the shoals, and then left us, when we proceeded without further accident to the whaling village of S. Amarro de Catu, off which we anchored for the night. Of course there was a fiesta, church bells, fireworks, and dancing, at which, being welcome, we assisted.

The next day we sailed to Bahia. First we had to beat down a rather narrow channel; however, the pilot, though sad, was confident. Said he,—

“There are no more sandbanks now; there are only a few rocks ahead; sandbanks may change their position, rocks cannot.”

“But a mermaid can move even rocks.”



On hearing this all the poor fellow's confidence vanished, and a terrible anxiety, to be easily read on his face, took its place. We, too, felt anxious ; for, after so many specimens of his ignorance, we doubted his accurate knowledge of the position of the rocks ; for our part, he being pilot, we preferred sandbanks. However, all went well ; we sailed down the river with its beautiful banks, passed Itaparica again, crossed the broad Reconcavo studded with quaint native craft, and before night were at anchor once more under Fort la Mar. The pleasant trip was over. The temperature, by the way, during this voyage ranged from 88° to 94° in our cabin.

I stayed in Bahia for another thirty-six hours, and then sailed for the north. It puzzled me somewhat to decide what should be my next port of call on my way to the West Indies. Having seen the principal and most beautiful of Brazilian cities, I did not care to call at any other ports of this empire ; besides which, I wanted to make a lengthy sea-voyage of it now, in order to blow some of the malaria out of myself. Thus I determined to sail direct for distant Guiana, but the question was, whether to make for a harbour of Dutch, French or English Guiana.

Cayenne, as being one of the most remarkable penal settlements in the world, rather excited my curiosity. Having no charts or pilot-directories for the coast to the north of Brazil, I hunted all over Bahia in search of these. It was in vain ; there was nothing of the kind to be found here. This was awkward, for I knew that all the coast north of the Amazon is so obstructed with mudbanks, far out to sea, that charts, and good ones, too, are quite in-

dispensable for a skipper wishing to make any of the harbours, especially if the skipper be an amateur one, like myself. However, I found among the captains, who loafed about the ship-chandlers, an old German, master of a barque loading here with sugar for Hamburg. He knew Demerara well, and gave me such plain directions for making the mouth of that river that I made up my mind to sail for Georgetown, the capital of British Guiana.

The directions of my friendly skipper were as follows: Get hold of the coast near Berbice, and sail on in four-fathom soundings till you sight the light-house and fort at the mouth of the Demerary river; when they bear S.S.W., sail straight in without fear. For a vessel of the *Falcon's* draught these directions are all that is wanted, but they would hardly do for a much larger craft.

From Bahia to Georgetown is about 2600 English miles, so this was to be one of our long voyages. I applied at the English consulate for a bill of health, and was astonished when a foul one was handed to me, stating that there was yellow fever in the port of Bahia. Such may have been the case, but, if so, I cannot see why the gentleman who was acting for our consul, then absent, should have given a merchant-captain, who preceded me by a few minutes only, a clean bill. I found at the ship-chandler's afterwards that several other captains had received clean bills of health.

On the 13th of January, having taken our water on board and a supply of stores, we got under weigh, the afternoon breeze enabling us soon to get outside the bay among the heaving Atlantic waves. Our

old enemy, the northerly monsoon, was still blowing, but not so boisterously as is his fashion further south.

For the first 600 miles of the voyage, that is to near Cape San Roque, I decided to keep hold of the land, taking short tacks, not only that we might enjoy the scenery, but with the object of fishing. For outside the inner reef of the Recife, there extends for a thousand miles or more along this coast, and parallel to it, a submerged reef of coral, known as the Prancel, one of the finest fishing-grounds for rock-fish in the world. We found it so, as we now tacked backwards and forwards across it for a week, securing bonitos, rock-cod, king-fish, dolphins, sword-fish, and a dozen other species with whose English names I am unacquainted, in large quantities.

The weather was fine, though the sea was choppy and sometimes high; so we enjoyed these seven days—for the monotony of an ocean voyage is much relieved by being, as we were, ever in sight of a varying and beautiful coast.

We passed the great Cocals, village after village of negro fishermen, with whom, as they came out to us in their strange boats, we often conversed, saw Sergipe, gave Cape Coruripe and the neighbouring reefs of San Rodrigo a wide berth, and took a board up to the mouth of the mighty Rio San Francisco, a river 1800 miles in length, the most valuable water-course in Brazil, and along whose banks dwell one-sixth of the population of the empire.

On the 17th of January we came to where forest-clad heights fell abruptly in cliffs of red rock into the ocean, and behind them the far purple peaks of the inland Serra Bariga rose into the pale blue sky.

On the 18th of January the coast changed once more, being gently undulating and covered with groves of fruit-trees, unplanted by man. This day we passed the bay of Alagoas and Maceio, and at night sailed along a coast lit up for leagues by a great forest fire.

On the 20th of January we doubled Cape San Agostinho, and soon after discerned the hill of Olinda with its many churches and convents, and the great flat city of Pernambuco. A very bright idea now struck me. I had been rather troubled about my foul bill of health, and feared quarantine in Demerara. Now, if I put into Pernambuco, where yellow fever had not yet broken out, I might get a clean bill for Demerara. It was worth trying; the Pernambucan authorities, I knew, would not quarantine me, though yellow fever had got under weigh at Bahia. The Brazilians don't mind Yellow Jack; they are too familiar with him; besides, he does not attack a native often, but only sweeps off the foreign sailors and such like strangers. Had it been small-pox, now, that had been written across my bill of health, I should certainly have been quarantined, for the Brazilian dreads that disease indeed, and rightly, for it commits fearful ravages among the South American populations.

So it was that, to the dismay of my mate, I put into Pernambuco after all (he took precious good care, by the way, not to go on shore during our stay). Refusing the services of a pilot, I took the vessel through the Picao or little passage—the narrow entrance I have described as under the old Dutch fort on the Recife, and brought up within the great break-

water, nearly opposite to my old hotel. Several mail-steamers were anchored without, while within the Recife I recognized, to my surprise and joy, the *Norseman* telegraph-ship, which, as my readers will remember, towed us into Maldonado just a year back.

I succeeded in getting a clean bill of health for Demerara on the morrow after my arrival, and passed the remainder of the day with my old friends of the *Norseman*.

While I was on shore a mutiny broke out on the *Falcon*. Giobatta Panissa refused to obey the mate, drew his knife on him, and compelled him to beat a precipitate retreat into the cabin, where the mate, finding a loaded revolver, in his turn forced the other to retire up the companion to the maindeck. At this stage of the proceedings I arrived on board, and, after settling matters very quickly, pitched into the mate roundly for his impotence in preserving discipline when I was away, explaining to him that it was his duty to at once hit on the head with the weightiest bit of iron handy any one who ventured to question his commands. As for Panissa, I got hold of him by the collar, and informed him that it was my unalterable intention to throw him overboard, whether we were in port or mid-ocean, on the very next occasion he even talked of using a knife.

Having thus restored peace to the vessel, I looked around and found them a lot of hard work to do, so as to keep them quiet for the rest of the day.

On the following day, the 22nd of January, having taken on board an abundant stock of bananas, pine-apples, yams, sweet potatoes, and manioka, we sailed

out of the harbour—this time by the larger Olinda passage.

It is 2000 miles from Pernambuco to the mouth of the Demerary. The voyage occupied us exactly ten days, so this is the best log the *Falcon* can show ; and, indeed, I do not think it would be easy to find another yacht of her tonnage that had ever kept up a rate of 200 miles a day for ten consecutive days. Our best day's work was 220 nautical, or 253 English, miles.

There were two causes that conduced to this rapid run. In the first place we had done with the northerly monsoon, for about here are its limits ; and we sailed away from Pernambuco before a fresh south-east wind, which enabled us to run for days under all canvas, spinnaker included. We encountered no calms on crossing the line, but passed straight from the south-east to the north-east trade-winds, which in their turn were favourable to us, being on our beam.

In the second place we had a strong, favourable current with us from Cape San Roque to Demerara. It is on Cape San Roque, the easternmost extremity of the New World, from which the coasts fall away at right angles the one to the other, that the great ocean current from the Cape of Good Hope striking, bifurcates—one stream flowing down the coast of South America to the south-west, known as the Brazilian current, which, allied to the northerly monsoon, had troubled us ever since we left the Plate ; and the other stream flowing up the coast of South America to the north-west—this known as the main equatorial current ; further on, after it has crossed the Caribbean Sea and Gulf of Mexico, receiving the, to

us, more familiar appellation of the Gulf Stream. This equatorial current is of great assistance to vessels proceeding up the coast from the Cape San Roque. The rate of it varies according to the season of the year, sometimes, it is said, flowing as rapidly as four knots an hour. The greatest difference we observed between our distance run in twenty-four hours, as recorded by log and observation, was fifty miles, which would give a two-knot current.

For the first six days of the voyage the wind blew fresh from the south-east, enabling us to make about seven to eight knots an hour through the water. This brought us to the Equator, when the wind veered rather rapidly round to the north-east, and so continued till we reached Demerara. We did not encounter any calm whatever; indeed, the lowest rate logged for any hour of the voyage was five and a half knots.

For the first few days we hugged the coast, saw the port of Parahiba, and passed close to the Rocas, those perilous reefs that lie off Cape San Roque, and which are so dreaded by mariners; but now a light-house is being constructed on one of the higher rocks; we could perceive the men working on it as we sailed by.

During this portion of the voyage we passed many jangadas, the clumsy native coasters; they sail well, but do not appear to be built for really bad weather; but bad weather is of rare occurrence on this tropical ocean. I suppose when a jangada is caught by a gale outside it goes down.

The Brazilian, like all other negroes, is of a humorous disposition. The gigantic ebon skipper of one of

these jangadas, nude, save for a girdle of cocoa-matting round his loins, hailed us as we sailed by. He tilted his head backwards, and spoke as if haughtily throwing his words down on us—the ugly, guttural words of the negro-Portuguese patois. Waving to the distant coast, he said,—

“Can you inform me what part of the world that is, *senor*?”

“It is America,” I replied.

“Indeed!” looking at it admiringly and patronizingly. “America! well, ’tis a handsome country. I’ll go there; *adios*.”

After doubling Cape San Roque, we left the land and took a course more to seawards, so as to avoid the variable inshore currents, and to fall in with the main body of the equatorial current. When we were off San Luiz do Maranhao we had an offing of about 200 miles, which we kept till we approached Guiana.

We caught a great many fish during this run, especially dolphins of large size. It was indeed pleasant, though rather monotonous, sailing. As the wind and current were in the same direction, the sea was remarkably smooth, rolling on in long, oily-looking waves of tepid water under a blazing sun.

The temperature in our cabin was high,  $85^{\circ}$  to  $90^{\circ}$ . We crossed the Equator on the 26th of January in longitude  $42^{\circ} 28'$ . On the 28th of January we were off the mouths of the Amazon, but too far out to sea to find ourselves in the discoloured water that this huge river pours out into the ocean.

Now that we had a north-east wind and a beam sea, high and choppy at times, our motion was not so



comfortable as it had been for the first six days of the voyage ; we rolled heavily, took much water on board, and on several occasions were under two-reefed main-sail.

On the 29th of January, being off the north frontier of Brazil, and Cayenne bearing west of us, 170 miles, we steered so as to approach the coast once more. This day we came into a very heavy sea, with nasty waves breaking and curling up against the rapid current ; with us the wind was not strong, but a gale must have been blowing somewhere. We had now sailed into a very different climate from that which prevails on the healthy coasts of Brazil. The sky, instead of being clear, was ever overcast ; an unhealthy yellow haze hung upon the sea by night, and the atmosphere was oppressively close. I have since read a work by a naval officer, who observes how debilitating an effect is produced by this great heat accompanied by moisture. He states he often had half his men below on the sick-list while sailing off the coast of the Guianas. The crew of the *Falcon*, who seem to have got into a generally bad state of health, felt these influences, and were suffering from fever and those bilious and intestinal disorders that are common in these latitudes.

On the 31st of January, having obtained no observation of the sun for two days, in consequence of the heavy vapours, but knowing that the land could not be far off, we hove-to at daybreak to take soundings, but found no bottom in forty fathoms. This day we contrived to get the meridian altitude, and an observation of the sun for longitude at four p.m. We discovered that we were but twenty miles to the north

of the river Surinam in Dutch Guiana. On taking a cast of the lead, we found we were in twelve fathoms. The water here was of a dirty soup-colour, as it is far out to sea, all along this coast.

## CHAPTER XVIII.

THE coast of Guiana, indeed of all the countries between the Amazons and the Gulf of Paria, a stretch of upwards of a thousand miles, is one of the strangest and most dreary in the world, rich though the inner country may be. For here the silt brought down by many mighty rivers, notably the Amazon and Orinoco, has formed a broad strip of low alluvial land that extends far out seawards from the forest-clad hills. It is difficult to distinguish where these vast plains terminate, and the sea begins, for the slope is so gradual that the mariner can find soundings when yet a day's sail from the coast; and a vessel can drive ashore and be broken up by the heavy rollers on the shoals, though from her mast-head no land be visible. And to mariners thus wrecked poor is the prospect of escape in the boats. For if they are not swamped by the breakers and reach smoother water, they can go on for long leagues, the sea but very gradually shallowing, till there be but a few feet of water under them, and going further they will find vegetation indeed, but not land, for dense groves of mangroves grow out into the sea, and in places forests of huge trees. And now the

boat can go no further, nor can the men proceed on foot, for the mud underneath is soft as butter and deep, so that one venturing on it will sink wholly in it. Indeed, it appears a hopeless land of slime and fever, quite unfitted for man, unless it be for the Tree-Indians, a low race of fish-eating savages that, like birds, build their homes among the branches of the flooded forests on the Gulf of Paria. But within this outlying waste of mud there lies one of the most fertile countries of the world. If one ascends any of the creeks and rivers that pierce the outer swamps, and afford the sole means of communication to the interior, he will find himself among the richest plains of earth, where are cultivated sugar, cocoa, and all tropical produce ; while further inland are mountains and valleys covered with one dense primeval forest of the rarest cabinet woods ; but this latter, yet unexplored, is inhabited only by Indian tribes, cannibals some of them, for the settlements of the few white men are solely on the very unhealthy, but fertile low-lying, coast-region, chiefly at the mouths of the rivers.

At midday, January the 31st, we were, as I have said, about twenty miles from the nearest land, near the river Surinam. The lightship that lies off the mouth of the Berbice river, and which is moored about twelve miles out to sea, was now but 130 miles distant, and for this I now shaped a direct course.

As I had no chart and knew not how far out to sea the tongues of the shoals might extend, I took casts of the lead at frequent intervals. So soft is the bottom hereabouts that it is difficult to feel when the lead reaches it, and about a foot must be deducted

from the depth indicated to allow for the sinking into the mud.

A fresh E.N.E. wind, driving us on at the rate of seven knots an hour, blew during the night, yet a heavy haze lay on the ocean. The soundings decreased as we advanced till at three a.m. we found but three fathoms of water, so we hauled two points to windward and got into the line of five-fathom soundings. We were then off the mouth of the great Corentyn river, that divides British from Dutch Guiana.

At six a.m. the soundings quite suddenly fell to three fathoms, and we found ourselves in the midst of very heavy and dangerous rollers. These were so high and steep that we had at once to haul our wind and make for deeper water. For upwards of ten minutes we were in real peril of foundering; a heavy-laden merchant-vessel would certainly have gone down. As we crossed these waves, our motion was so extremely violent that I fully expected to see the mast chucked right over the bows at any moment. Each sea washed over us, filling our decks with water. I was in charge of the deck at the time. The tremendous jerks, the noise, and the alarming angles the vessel assumed, sometimes seeming to stand almost on end, brought up the watch below, who fully expected to find that we had driven on shore among the breakers and were fast tumbling to pieces. But the *Falcon* behaved admirably as usual; and after steering seaward for a quarter of an hour, we reached the six-fathom soundings, and were in comparatively smooth water again.

I learnt afterwards at Georgetown that the rollers,

which, breaking more or less heavily, are always to be met with on this shoal, are a well-known danger to the mariners of this coast ; and that many a vessel has not come out of them to tell the tale as we did, but has gone down with all hands.

At nine a.m. we passed close to the Berbice light-ship, and perceived on our port hand land once more, and, what is more, English land, the first I had seen since I had sailed out of Falmouth Harbour.

We coasted along the shore in four-fathom soundings, the sea being quite smooth, and of a reddish tint. The shore here does not present so desolate an appearance from the sea as it does to the east or west of the British colony. We saw a long low line of forest, above which at intervals rose the lofty chimneys of the sugar factories. We passed many of the colony craft, shallow, but fast, sloops and schooners, very different in build to the coasters of Brazil that we had hitherto seen.

In the afternoon we sighted the lighthouse and the shipping at the mouth of the Demerara river. Following the instructions of my friend, the German skipper, I sailed on till these bore S.S.W., and then made straight for the entrance to the river, finding nowhere less water than three fathoms. At four p.m. we were within the Demerara, and dropped our anchor off the fort. The captain of the port soon came off to us, gave us pratique, and kindly piloted us to a convenient berth, just in front of Georgetown market-place, near the landing-stage of the steam-ferry that affords communication between one side of the river and the other.

↑ Having stowed our canvas, we now looked around

us. The town that stretched in front of us on the right bank of the river was certainly quite unlike any city I had yet seen in tropical America in every respect. At a glance one could perceive that this was a British, not a Spanish or Portuguese, settlement. None of the massive quaint old houses of stone here, none of the irregular streets as of Bahia, the dirt and careless untidiness, but bran-new, unhandsome, but very practical and comfortable, buildings of wood and corrugated iron sheets, cleanliness and order. What chiefly puzzled my crew was, that all the negroes that passed us in canoes and rafts spoke English to each other. It was evidently quite a new idea to my Italians, who imagined that all blacks spoke Portuguese alone. I must confess I felt somewhat as they did. It hardly seemed natural to me, when I went on shore, to hear my native tongue spoken by every one around me, black, yellow, or white, and I was constantly addressing people at first in Portuguese and Spanish.

On the morrow after my arrival in port, I landed on the Stelling by the market, and proceeded to inspect the town. The clean, tidy dress of the black and Creole policeman, the zouave uniform of the soldiers, forcibly brought to my mind that I was no longer in a foreign colony.

The streets of Georgetown are wide and regular, the houses are of wood with corrugated iron roofs, and all are erected on piles, standing, as it were, on stilts; thus the ground-floor, to explain myself by a bull, is some fourteen feet above the ground. The object of this style of architecture is to avoid the malaria that floats along the surface of the soil.

It has been found in all these countries, that if the dwelling-rooms be thus raised some feet from the ground the miasma is wholly avoided, or nearly so. In many parts of the north coast of South America, especially on the Spanish Main, to sleep one night on the surface of the soil ensures a certain death, so deadly are the malarious emanations.

What constitutes the great charm of Georgetown is that the glorious vegetation of the country has not been excluded from it, but grows in luxuriance between the houses. Viewed from the summit of the lighthouse, Georgetown presents not the appearance of a city, but of a lovely grove of tall palms and many flower-covered trees and bushes, with habitations scattered through it. The residential houses are built in the comfortable East Indian style, with verandahs surrounding them; each stands in its own garden. There are streets in Georgetown that are more like botanical gardens than streets, to which the tropical hot-houses of Kew are very deserts.

There is one very broad street at the back of government-house, the name of which I forget (the excellent Georgetown Club, of which I was an honorary member during my stay, is in it), and of it Georgetown should be proud. Along both sides of it are villas and wonderful gardens. In its centre, between shady avenues of trees, flows a sluggish canal, entirely covered with the magnificent *Victoria Regia* lilies. There is a botanical garden outside Georgetown, but the skill of man cannot outdo the splendours of the vegetation that will spring up anywhere in this land, where allowed to do so.

The population of Georgetown is indeed cosmo-



politan, for four continents are here abundantly represented. The Europeans are of course much in the minority. Of these, the Portuguese are the most numerous; the small tradesman and artificer class being largely made up of these frugal people. The Englishmen here are among the most agreeable and hospitable of their race. It was here I began to learn what was meant by West Indian hospitality.

After the hospitality of my countrymen in this colony, the next thing that the stranger observes is their hats. I do not think any town presents the spectacle of so varied a collection of head-gear. You could not wear anything that could be considered eccentric at Georgetown in the way of hats. Of course, first there are pith-helmets of every kind; straw hats of infinite breadth of brim; but it is, after all, in white felt-hats that the inhabitants show their ingenuity most; and high above them all towers the stupendous pyramid that graces the head of a certain popular and respected crown-officer. After the white nankeen-jacketted, much-hatted Britisher, come the representatives of Africa, the descendants of the black slaves, here a very worthless and vicious class. America is represented by nearly naked, half-idiotic, stunted Red Indians, who come down the river in their canoes from the interior to barter bows and arrows, skins of wild beasts, and other curiosities in the capital, and get dead-drunk with the proceeds. Then we have the Asiatic coolies, who are as numerous as the blacks. First, the inscrutable Chinese, who have their own quarter, and, more frugal than even the Portuguese, are gradually cutting out the latter as small tradesmen. Then the Hindoos, nude, save for the scanty loin-

cloth, slim of limb ; and, though of the lowest castes, beautiful and with noble heads ; sad, gentle men, who, quarter-staff in hand, walk softly through the streets ; men of an antique civilization, who look with contempt on their fellow-labourers, the African and American Indians, with their heavy animal faces, who never have had, and never will have, a civilization.

A large vessel came into Georgetown while I was there, and landed no less than 538 of these East Indian coolies, men, women, and children. The poor creatures seemed very puzzled and frightened on reaching their new home, but from all accounts their life in British Guiana among the plantations is generally a far more pleasant one than was their old one in Hindostan. They are very well looked after here, and the laws that have been framed to protect them are considered by impartial people to be even too favourable to them, and to be unjust to their employers. But, talking of the mixed population of Demerara, where, O where, are the lovely quadroon and octaroon girls, one reads of in the novels ? I saw none who had the slightest pretensions to beauty among these yellow maidens.

So many friends did I have in Georgetown, and so agreeably did time fly, that I extended my stay to a fortnight. The town was fairly healthy while I was there, though there was some yellow fever. A frightful epidemic of this pest of South America had been till recently raging in Demerara and in the Southern Antilles, but was now dying away. In Georgetown the fever had proved most fatal to the upper-class white residents and the officers of the garrison, not, as usual, being chiefly prevalent among the shipping in the river and the low quarters of the city. In con-

sequence of this the white troops had now been all sent home, the negro regiment alone remaining; so great had been the mortality among the Europeans that the constant dances that so characterize Demeraran and West Indian life were now conspicuous by their absence, for all were mourning many friends, if not relations, and a gloom hung over the usually gay and lively population. As a rule, Georgetown is as healthy as any city of tropical America.

One of those strange coincidences that we have all experienced at times occurred to me while here. I was dining one day at one of the largest sugar factories in the neighbourhood of Georgetown; my host informed me that one of his overseers, a young Englishman, was dying of yellow fever in the house at the time, the fatal symptom of the black vomit having just come on. On that night he died, and on the morrow I was shocked to find from the Georgetown paper that this poor fellow I had been so near the day before was an old Cambridge friend of mine, of the same college and year as myself.

Everywhere in the neighbourhood of Georgetown the jungle is cleared, and great plantations of sugar wave in the trade-wind. The country looks as if it ought to be the most unhealthy in the world, yet it is far from being that. It is but one vast plain of mud, drained by innumerable canals and ditches, which afford passage to canoes. It is no wonder that the Dutch seized this colony that to other peoples would have appeared the most uninviting portion of all the South American coast, for it must have strongly reminded them of their native land. Demerara is a tropical Holland, as skilfully dammed, canalled, and

irrigated as is the European home of its first possessors. Much of this rich land has been conquered from the ocean. Great sea-walls of faggots overlaid with stones keep out the water at high-tide, which would otherwise then overflow the plantations. At low-tide the gates in this wall are opened, so that the pent in waters from the canals and drains find exit to the sea. Sometimes, after a spring-tide, the soft mud accumulates in banks outside these dikes, and, being higher than the level of the reclaimed land, prevents this out-drainage; then very regiments of coolies have to dig channels through the vast slimy mass, a seemingly Herculean task, till the imprisoned waters of the estates are released.

There is no genuine *terra firma* in this colony—that is, in the cultivated coast-regions. The dry earth forms but a thin crust over practically bottomless mud. Hence it has been found very difficult to erect really heavy buildings. They are certain to gradually sink. When the heavy machinery for the sugar factories was first introduced, great difficulties in this respect were experienced. As there is no stone in the neighbourhood of Georgetown, the few roads are paved in an ingenious manner. First brushwood is laid down on the road and fired; the mud that is dug out of the canals or ditches that border every thoroughfare here is then piled on the blazing pile. The fire bakes this into a hard red brick-like substance, which, broken up, makes very fair macadam.

I visited several of the cocoa and sugar plantations at the invitation of the hospitable planters and managers. Cocoa cultivation, by the way, is a new industry here, and promises to prove highly successful.

The planting and preparation of sugar is carried on in Demerara on a scale that would astonish the planters of Brazil and Tucuman. Some of these sugar estates are little kingdoms, the manager of which must be a man of no ordinary organizing skill, besides being able to rule men. Generally he has some twenty young Englishmen, aspirants to managership, as overseers under him.

The huge buildings, full of complicated machinery, are in some estates lit up by night with the electric light, and then weird indeed is the spectacle of the naked coolies and the whirling wheels; one seems to be gazing at a very inferno of gigantic machinery, among which flit the swarthy Hindoos, silently like ghosts.

On each of these big estates dwells a very nation of coolies, who are very well cared for. Each estate has its large hospital and even school for these labourers and their families.

Having obtained the necessary permission to land there, I started one morning to visit the penal settlement on the Mazaruni river. The little passenger-steamer that ascends the Essequibo calls at this settlement, accomplishing the voyage in about six hours. We steamed along the muddy shallow water till we came to the broad mouth of the Essequibo, and entered the river by one of the channels between the many islands that encumber this estuary; great shallow islands these, formed of the alluvial matter brought down from the interior, and all covered with a dense vegetation. One of these, the Dauntless Bank, has been but recently formed, having grown round the wreck of a vessel of the same name. This nucleus was sufficient to collect in a few years an immense mass

of mud and sand, and there is now quite a large island covered with a lofty vegetation. I visited it later on with some friends in a schooner, having been promised considerable sport ; but, save for shooting some scarlet ibis, and catching some small mullet with a seine net, after wading all day up to our waists in poisonous mud, we did nothing.

The low banks of the Essequibo are covered with a rank vegetation, but through the openings formed by the creeks are to be seen glimpses of the plantations of sugar-cane that lie behind. After passing a small island, on which stood the ruins of an old Dutch fort, the scenery became more picturesque ; the banks were higher and clothed with forest, and rocky islets rose above the water, showing that we were now so far in the interior of the country as to have reached genuine *terra firma* once again, and had passed the belt of bottomless mud.

We steamed by a long island which I observed was, unlike the others, inhabited. There were many huts on it, cattle, and cultivated patches of cassava and plantains. This was, I was informed, Cow Island, the leper-island of the colony. All who are affected with this fearful disease are sent here. There are no boats on the island, as the lepers are not allowed to leave it on any pretence.

Soon after passing this we came to where the three rivers Essequibo, Mazaruni, and Cuyuni join. It is here, on a bluff some 100 feet high, sloping down to the first-named river, a most picturesque position, that the penal settlement is established.

I was well piloted over this establishment ; for my friend, Captain Fortescue, the inspector of prisons for

the colony, luckily happened to have come up on the steamer with me. Landing with him, I was introduced to the governor, with whom I stayed until the steamer started back for Georgetown on the morrow.

This is indeed a model penal settlement. If any fault can be found with it, it is that the most healthy, beautiful, and in every respect most desirable spot of the colonized portion of British Guiana has been selected as the residence of malefactors.

Here, at an elevation sufficient to be almost entirely free from the malaria, the buildings connected with the settlement are scattered over an undulating expanse of lawn and garden, backed behind by a primeval forest that extends to Venezuela. These buildings have a singularly cheerful and unprisonlike appearance. All have been constructed by the labour of the convicts. Indeed, this penal colony is, I believe, entirely independent of the outer world for all its necessities. The prisoners grow their own sugar-canes and make their own sugar; they cultivate an extensive provision-ground, breed cattle and sheep, work in the gneiss quarries whence comes the only stone used in muddy Demerara, and are employed in a dozen other industries at least.

The convicts are nearly all Chinese, East Indian coolies, and blacks. Of Europeans there are not many. There were but two Englishmen among them when I was there, but generally there are to be found a few Frenchmen. These are runaway convicts from the French penal colony of Cayenne. They manage to steal boats occasionally, and to escape—a dozen or so at a time—to British Guiana. As they are for the most part regular *mauvais sujets*, they generally renew

their old games in Demerara, are convicted of some crime, and packed off to Mazaruni.

The Hindoo coolies give the prison authorities much trouble ; for, when condemned to penal servitude for a long term of years, they are much given to committing suicide. Notwithstanding every precaution, instances of this are of frequent occurrence. They proceed to effect a happy despatch in a most deliberate manner. Being deprived of knives and any ordinary implements of destruction, they will choke themselves with their loin-girdles. Those that are suspected of this suicidal tendency are watched with unceasing vigilance.

The cemetery of the settlement is also the flower-garden, a lovely spot thickly grown with the most gorgeous plants of the tropic zone.

Behind the enclosure of the prison grounds stretches, as I have before said, the primeval forest that extends to Venezuela. The black warders entertain a wholesome dread of this unknown waste, for a fixed idea exists among them that an invading Venezuelan army will one day march out of it upon the British colony. It seems that Venezuela did, or does, lay claim to this portion of Guiana ; whereas the English lay down the frontier as upwards of a hundred miles to the north-west of this. Venezuelans have been known to issue out of the depths of this forest, and make their appearance at the convict settlement ; but these, far from being invaders, are unfortunate fugitives who, after the collapse of their party in one of the usual revolutionary wars that so adorn the history of all South American republics, travel through the dense jungle to seek protection on British soil. These



weary tattered foreigners, speaking a strange tongue, cause a good deal of unnecessary panic among the blacks when they appear among them ; but that the poor wretches should be for a moment mistaken for ferocious invaders is indeed curious.

On one occasion no less a personage than a fine old general, the commander-in-chief of the losing side, walked out of the forest, and came up to report himself to the heads of our penal establishment.

Just as the steamer was starting the next morning, I perceived, as I stood on the bridge, a long canoe come alongside, manned by nude aborigines. These Indians were a better-looking race than I had seen in the Chaco and Pampas, and certainly of far less ferocious countenance. Their faces wore a fixed expression of apathetic content and mildness of disposition. The women were hideous, and the copper bodies of the men were ornamented with stripes of black paint. Several of them came on board to take a passage to Georgetown, carrying with them bows and arrows, cassava-crushers, skins of birds, and the logs of wood with which they poison the rivers and so secure the fish. These curiosities they would sell to the Chinese and Portuguese curiosity-shop-keepers for a little silver coin, or plenty of bad rum, or, maybe, for one of those extraordinary guns that are expressly imported for their benefit—like the child's toy-gun in appearance and of scarcely more use. I believe they are known as buck-guns to the trade, not that they are intended to shoot bucks or anything else, but simply to be sold to Buck Indians, as the male aborigines are politely called by their white rulers. One of these Indians must have been a chieftain, for he owned a pair of

nankeen trousers, not being girdled round the loins merely, like the others. He did not wear his trousers during the voyage, however, but kept them carefully folded under his arm till we were near Georgetown, when he deliberately, with a gravity and unconsciousness that were delicious, put them on before all the passengers on the main-deck. Then his followers clustered round him admiringly, felt the texture of the material, and expressed approval in their soft sleepy-sounding language.

I should have much liked to have undertaken an expedition into the interior of Guiana, one of the most grand of tropical countries, though but little known and explored ; but the costs of such a trip are heavy, unless one has companions to share them. Mr. Barrington Brown's descriptions of the renowned Roraima Mountains and the Kaieteur Falls, which latter he himself discovered, are indeed tempting to all who love the wonders of nature.

## CHAPTER XIX.

WITH much reluctance I tore myself away from my friends of Georgetown, and sailed for my next port, Bridgetown, in the island of Barbados, distant about four hundred miles. We reached the lightship at about daybreak, and there found a very nasty sea running. High steep rollers were coming in, that tossed us about in a very uncomfortable way.

The lightship was no less lively. As we passed her she hoisted three signals to us in succession, J. L., "Appearances are threatening;" J. P., "Heavy weather coming;" and J. S., "Get an offing." As we knew that those on board had some good reason for thus warning us, we did not disregard their advice, but made for the open sea on the port tack. At two p.m., considering that we had now got a sufficient offing, and would easily weather the outermost shoals off the Essequibo, I put the vessel about, and found that she would just lay on her course for Barbados when close-hauled on the starboard tack.

The wind N.N.E. to N.E. had now freshened; the sea was very rough, in consequence doubtlessly of the opposition of the wind and current, which was rushing with great velocity towards the Gulf of Paria. This head-sea deadened our way, and we shipped a good deal of water at times.

On the following day the weather was worse; the ship laboured a good deal and our decks were constantly full of water. We were obliged to take two reefs in our main-sail and set the third jib.

On the 17th of February the weather improved, though there was still an unpleasantly choppy sea. This day we overhauled one of the island schooners and were pleased to find that we not only sailed much faster than she did, but that she made much more leeway than ourselves. Her main-sail was a huge sliding-gunter, as is usual in West Indian schooners, and set flat as a board ; indeed, the sailmakers in these islands know their trade well, and often cut sails that Laphorne would not be ashamed of.

During the whole of this voyage I was suffering from a bad attack of remittent bilious fever, which for three days quite prostrated me, and prevented me from taking my watch. This fever, common in tropical South America, is very severe while it lasts. Nearly all the symptoms of yellow fever accompany it, including the yellowness. Indeed, it is often mistaken for yellow fever, and many deaths that occur through it on vessels at sea are put down to the more deadly and contagious disorder. My mate of course was sure that it was yellow fever from which I was suffering, and was in much dread of contagion. It may have been so, as far as I know, but I rather think it was not. Anyhow, I mastered it by copious doses of that valuable drug which is the specific for either disease, calomel.

At midday, the 18th of February, we sighted the island of Barbados. As we approached it, its often-remarked likeness to the Isle of Wight, as viewed from the sea, struck me. It is about the same size as the English island, and, like it, is covered with verdure. But the verdure of Barbados, when seen nearer, proves to be that of the sugar-cane, which is planted over the whole island from the mountain-tops to the seashore. We had been sailing all this time on the

starboard tack, but now found that we just failed of making our destination without tacking.

At about midnight we were some four miles from the shore, under the lee of the island, between South Point lighthouse and Needham Point. Tacking off and on, we preserved this position until daylight, when we sailed into Carlisle Bay and came to an anchor off Bridgetown in the man-of-war ground.

Bridgetown, seen from the anchorage, does not look like a town at all, but more like a village of huts scattered over a pleasant grove of cabbage-palms, cotton-trees, and other tropical vegetation. No sooner had our chain run out of the hawse-pipes than we were surrounded by a very fleet of negro boats, whose garrulous occupants commenced to swarm over our decks until we drove them off forcibly.

Their importunity was fearful ; there were fat bum-boat women vending ginger, bananas, and what not ; other damsels who wished to do our washing for us at "half a dollar de dozen piece, massa ;" and others—men, women, and children—who had no ostensible trade, but were adroit beggars and thieves. I had nowhere else experienced so disagreeable an ovation. It would be well if the rigid laws about visiting vessels that prevail at Bahia and other Brazilian ports were enforced in this harbour ; but the Barbadian negro is free—a great deal too free to be otherwise than exceedingly objectionable.

As I still felt very ill, and it was Sunday, I did not go on shore this day. On Monday, the 20th of February, I landed in my boat in the Carenage, or inner and artificial harbour. I was surprised to find all the shops shut, and to hear the church bells ringing ; and, on inquiring the cause of this, was told that this

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had been proclaimed a holiday and day of thanksgiving throughout the island of Barbados for the cessation of the yellow fever. This curse of the West Indies had been raging in an epidemic form for many months in this island which is generally free from it, and is indeed considered to be by far the healthiest of all the Antilles. As at Georgetown, the white regiments had been removed.

I soon saw that my stay in Barbados would be prolonged, for I had brought several letters of introduction with me, and my friends soon became legion. The hospitality of the Barbadians is well known, and they take very good care that no stranger leaves them but with regret, and bearing away with him most agreeable memories of the delightful little island.

Barbados seemed to me utterly strange after the countries I had recently visited. I felt as if I was in Europe—in England once again; for it is not the towns merely here that show signs of civilization, but the whole country. No trackless backwoods and jungles meet the traveller; no indications of a new country and of a struggle between barbarism and civilization. The whole island is as carefully cultivated as the richest portions of Great Britain; good roads (painfully glaring, by the way, as they are macadamized with snow-white coral) are everywhere—indeed, form a closer network than anywhere in England. Pleasant country-houses, too, are dotted over all the country, the habitations of planters, each surrounded with its sugar plantations, boiling-houses, and windmill; for the windmill is the great feature of a Barbadian landscape. Sugar-making is nowhere carried on on so large a scale as in Demerara, but by private individuals of small capital. Hence the use of wind,

as a rule, instead of steam-power. Happily the trade-wind blows fresh and strong during the very season of the sugar-making. Indeed, on the whole, Barbados gives one the impression of not being a colony at all, but an old settled country; it is, indeed, our most ancient settlement in this portion of the globe, having been in our undisputed possession since 1625.

So many friends had I, that there was no part of the island that I did not visit at the invitation of the hospitable planters—from the petroleum wells, on the windward coast, to the quaintly-shaped hills of the districts known as Scotland at the other extremity. We had some pleasant picnics and cruises, too, in the *Falcon*, visiting in her the little ports of Holetown and Speight's-town. One day we circumnavigated the island with a party of friends, carefully avoiding of course the coral reef that entirely surrounds Barbados. This voyage we accomplished in eleven hours. We passed a vessel that had run ashore on the reefs off South Point. She was rapidly breaking up, and the timber that formed her cargo was scattered floating over the ocean. The negroes of the windward coast, famous wreckers, were hard at work collecting this, and no doubt managed to steal a good deal before a body of police was sent down to look after them.

My cook now became very ill indeed, and I was obliged to send him to the colonial hospital. His illness promised to be a very tedious one, and I was much puzzled as to what to do next. To sail away without him, the best sailor and the most trustworthy man I had—in fact, the only one of the crew worth anything—was a measure which I felt great repugnance in taking. Again, to wait at Bridgetown until he was well enough to resume his duties, which might be

a question of many months, was impossible. I frequently visited the poor fellow at the hospital, as he was very lonely there, not being able to express himself in English, and finding no one who understood Spanish or Italian. That we should be obliged to sail away without him evidently preyed on his mind, for he was really attached to me and to the vessel, and nothing could compensate him for a separation.

However, other circumstances led me to decide on a course of action which certainly was the remotest from my thoughts when I sailed into Bridgetown. I was recalled to England by important business that could not well wait, and I saw that I must give up my cruise through the West Indian Islands, and sail home at once. Things standing thus, certain of my friends put it before me that it would be well to discharge my crew, lay up the *Falcon*, return to England by steamer, and in the delightful winter-season, after the hurricane months were over, come back to the West Indies, refit the yacht, ship a native crew, and carry out my old plan. I doubt whether I should have given way, had it not been that several friends offered then to join me for a cruise right through the islands. I had now so long been alone on board that the idea of companions seemed very pleasant. Such a voyage with a merry party of West Indians who knew the islands, and would have friends everywhere, was indeed something to look forward to. My friend Mr. Taylor, of Fontabelle, kindly offered to store my property and look after the yacht while I was away, if I hauled her up on the beach by his garden. Thus it was that I determined to lay up the *Falcon* for a time, and suspend my cruise for some six months.

There were not wanting other reasons to help me



in coming to this decision ; among others, the necessity for a thorough overhauling of my vessel, and my own rather ill-condition of health. My system was soaked with malaria, which weakened me and took away much of my energy and pleasure in the voyage.

Seeing the rather unaccountable ill-health of all hands on board the yacht, continuing as it had done over a period of some months, a suspicion as to a probable cause crossed my mind, which has now been much strengthened by an article I recently read in a medical journal.

Our diet while at sea, and to a great extent also while in port, had consisted in tinned meats. Now, these preserved provisions, wholesome though they may be when fresh, do not, as many suppose, keep so for an indefinite time. Chemical changes of some kind take place in the contents of the tin, while the metal itself, dissolved as it must gradually become by the acids that some provisions contain, is itself more or less injurious. Many of our tins had been two years on board the *Falcon* and most of that time in the tropics. In my opinion this had something to do with the symptoms of blood-poisoning that were manifested by several of our company.

Had I alone been the sufferer, I should not have attributed my ill-health to the tinned meats ; for malaria and the poisonous effects of some of the foul laguna water I had drunk during my ride to Tucuman were sufficient to account for my condition ; but here were these Italians, who had visited no very unhealthy country, had caught no malaria, drank no bad water, prostrated with disorders that decidedly indicated the presence of some poison in the system. It is a question if the old sea-diet of salt meat is not more wholesome

after all than an exclusive living on these tasty, but rather treacherous, preserved meats and vegetables.

I paid off my crew, found means for them to return to Europe, and set out to lay up the *Falcon*. I anchored her off Mr. Taylor's house and took everything out of her ; then with the aid of some twenty negroes, rollers, strong tackle, and screw-jacks, I gradually hauled the old vessel out of the water, up the shingle bank to a pretty berth under the shade of waving cabbage-palms, cocoas, and manchineals.

I did not return to England by the mail-steamer, but in the 500-ton barque *Augusta*, commanded by my friend, Captain Young. After a very pleasant, though rather rough voyage of thirty days, we sighted Hartland Point, a strong south-west gale blowing at the time ; then hove-to under the lee of Lundy to take the pilot on board, and were towed into Bristol Docks. After a nearly two years' absence I was indeed glad to step once more on English land and walk through the streets of the dear old western town I knew so well—the fresh, rosy faces of the people seeming very pleasing after the sallow and pallid inhabitants of the tropics.

I was unable to go to Barbados in the autumn, as I proposed, to resume my cruise ; for now I was laid up for many months, suffering from severe *sequelæ* of malaria. So the old vessel still lies high and dry under the waving palms, awaiting till her master return to take her from isle to isle of the lovely Caribbean sea, and across the Atlantic to her moorings off familiar old Southampton, which he is eagerly looking forward to do ; but up to now, alas ! the doctors insist on keeping apart the *Falcon* and her affectionate owner and captain.

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